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Use of Dialogue Journals to Support Independent Reading in a Fourth Grade Classroom

Kylie Armstrong

The College at Brockport, armstrong.kylie@gmail.com

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Use of Dialogue Journals to Support Independent Reading in a Fourth Grade
Classroom

by
Kylie Armstrong
May 2012

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of the
State University of New York College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

Use of Dialogue Journals to Support Independent Reading in a Fourth Grade
Classroom

by

Kylie Armstrong

May 2012

APPROVED BY:

Dong-shin Shin RSK 4/17/2012

Advisor

Date

[Signature] 4.17.12

Director, Graduate Programs

Date

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Abstract

This was an inquiry-based research study exploring the impact of using dialogue journals to support independent reading within a fourth grade classroom. The research was qualitative in nature and featured multiple case studies. The overarching aim of this study was to investigate the following question: How does using a dialogue journal to support independent reading impact students' learning? The study sought to answer this question by exploring how writing in dialogue journals supports students' understanding of their independent reading, writing for a specific audience, and critical appreciation of books and reading attitude. Data collection included observations, interviews, and writing samples from dialogue journals. This data was then coded for understanding of reading, writing for an audience, and critical thinking about the text. Analysis showed all students indicated a positive attitude toward dialogue journals and an appreciation for the texts they had chosen to read. Most students were able to demonstrate their comprehension within their dialogue journals, and all students could be pushed to deeper thinking by the feedback from their teacher. Students kept their audience in mind by writing about the parts of their text they found interesting. Limitations to this study were the small number of participants and the short duration of the study. Future studies may seek to follow a larger population of students over the course of a year or multiple years.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

As a substitute teacher, I noticed an alarming trend during the time designated for independent reading; few students were actually engaged in their chosen texts. During my informal observations of sustained silent reading (SSR), the time designated for students to silently read books of their own choice for a specified period of time, I noticed students chatting with their peers, getting stuck in books that were beyond their comprehension, repeatedly getting up to exchange their book for another, or glancing through books far below their reading level. In the gradual release theory, teachers expect students to transfer the comprehension skills modeled and practiced during shared and guided reading experiences to their own independent reading choices (Fisher & Frey, 2008). However, during my informal observations of the time designated for independent reading, students were not showing the engagement with their chosen texts necessary for the type of thinking and comprehension expected by their teachers. I began to wonder how teachers could hold their students accountable for thinking deeply about their text during independent reading.

During my student teaching placement in a fourth grade classroom, students struggled putting their thoughts about a text into writing. Each week students read a text selection from a basal reading series as a whole class, and during this whole class reading, the teacher would stop to check for understanding by asking comprehension

questions. In preparation for the end-of-selection test, the teacher would then supply students with a series of comprehension questions about the text that they would answer in writing. Students could verbalize answers to comprehension questions during the whole class reading, but many struggled when they were asked to put those thoughts to paper. Unfortunately for the students, testing looks solely at the ideas students can write about rather than the thoughts they can articulate verbally. A lingering question following the completion of my student teaching was how I could better prepare students to demonstrate their understanding of what they have read through writing.

Dialogue journals represent a potential solution to both the issue of holding students accountable for thinking deeply about their independent reading and preparing students to demonstrate their understanding of a text through writing. Dialogue journals are an ongoing correspondence between teacher and student about the book the student has chosen to read independently. By writing letters back and forth on a consistent basis, the student is accountable for demonstrating his or her personal understanding of the book and the teacher has the opportunity to probe for deeper understanding. The student must also clearly articulate his or her thoughts in writing for a specific audience. When students are in the habit of writing about their reading, there may be less of a struggle when it comes time to answer those end-of-selection test comprehension questions.

Purpose of the Study

The overarching aim of this study was to pursue an inquiry into the following question: How does using a dialogue journal to support independent reading impact students' learning? I was more specifically interested in students' learning as it relates to reading and writing.

The study sought to answer this question by exploring the following sub-questions:

1. How does writing in a dialogue journal support students' understanding of their independent reading?
2. How does writing in a dialogue journal support writing for a specific audience?
3. How does writing in a dialogue journal support critical appreciation of books and reading attitude?

To answer these questions, the researcher collected and analyzed several sources of data including observations, interviews, and writing samples from dialogue journals. The first sub-question addressing students' understanding of their reading required data tracking evidence of students' comprehension and thinking about their text. The second sub-question required data demonstrating how students clearly articulated their thoughts when writing for the specific audience of their teacher. To determine how writing in a dialogue journal may support critical appreciation of reading and attitude, the third sub-question, the researcher needed data revealing

students' feelings as they relate to reading and writing about their reading in a dialogue journal.

Rationale

In the 2001 report that became the groundwork for No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the National Reading Panel (NRP) reported that, "...the Panel was unable to find a positive relationship between programs and instruction that encourage large amounts of independent reading and improvements in reading achievement, including fluency"(pp. 12-13). According to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), educational programs and practices must be proven as effective through scientific research, but in their report, the NRP did not find a significant amount of scientifically-based evidence supporting the effectiveness of independent reading programs. Independent reading programs featuring large amounts of independent reading alone such as the sustained silent reading (SSR) I observed require modifications.

Teachers may modify their independent reading program to include dialogue journals as a tool for facilitating deeper thinking and improving reading achievement. A key topic today is differentiating instruction, and dialogue journals represent an opportunity to tailor instruction to the individual needs of students. Teachers have the flexibility to decide what type of modeling, prompting, or questioning a student needs at that particular point in time based on what their student has written in their journal letter. The tailor-made feedback provided by teachers may benefit the student in other reading and writing settings as well.

Dialogue journals are grounded in *social constructivism*, an approach maintaining that social interaction is a requirement for learning and cognitive development. According to Lev Vygotsky (1978), this learning and cognitive development takes places within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), or the distance between what a student can do independently and what a student can do with the guidance of a more expert other. In dialogue journals, the interaction between the text, student, and teacher shapes the literacy development of the student. When teachers differentiate their feedback on an individual basis, they are working within the ZPD of their individual students. Through dialogue journals, teachers are able to push their students' thinking to levels they would be unable to reach alone. While the student has much to gain from this interaction, the process is mutually beneficial because writing in dialogue journals informs the teacher's instruction.

Study Approach

This was an inquiry-based research study exploring the impact of using dialogue journals to support independent reading. The research was qualitative in nature and featured multiple case studies. Data collection included observations, interviews, and writing samples from dialogue journals. These methods were most appropriate in pursuing the researcher's inquiry and helped tell a story about the fourth grade students in this classroom.

The thesis is composed of five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the study touching on the background, research questions, and rationale for

conducting the study. Chapter Two is a review of the literature influencing this study. In the third chapter, the thesis delves more deeply into the methodology and methods employed for data collection. Chapter Four analyzes the data and highlights significant issues while the final fifth chapter concludes and summarizes the thesis.

Summary

My observations as a substitute teacher and student teacher left me with lingering questions about how teachers could hold their students accountable for thinking deeply about their text during independent reading and how teachers could prepare students to demonstrate their comprehension of a text through writing. Dialogue journals represent a potential answer to both of these questions. By writing letters back and forth on a consistent basis, the student is accountable for demonstrating his or her personal understanding of the book and the teacher has the opportunity to probe for deeper understanding. The student must also clearly articulate his or her thoughts in writing for a specific audience. The overarching aim of this study was to investigate the following question: How does using a dialogue journal to support independent reading impact students' learning? The study sought to answer this question by exploring how writing in dialogue journals supports students' understanding of their independent reading, writing for a specific audience, and critical appreciation of books and reading attitude. According to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), educational programs and practices must be proven as effective through scientific research, but in their report, the NRP did not find a significant

amount of scientifically-based evidence supporting the effectiveness of independent reading programs. Teachers may modify their independent reading program to include dialogue journals as a tool for facilitating deeper thinking and improving reading achievement. This was an inquiry-based research study looking into the impact of using dialogue journals to support independent reading. The research was qualitative in nature and featured multiple case studies. Data collection included observations, interviews, and writing samples from dialogue journals.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature that has influenced this study. The first section looks at how using dialogue journals as a teaching practice is consistent with social constructivism. The next section examines how dialogue journals are supported by reader response theory. There then is a section delving into three levels of comprehension and how students use their dialogue journals to demonstrate those levels of understanding and thinking. I also review the current literature regarding dialogue journals while paying special attention to their benefits and challenges.

Social Constructivism

The written exchange that takes place between teacher and student in dialogue journals leads to the type of learning that is consistent with the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978). According to Vygotsky, social interaction is necessary for learning, and learning will take place when that interaction is with a more knowledgeable, expert other. Optimally, the more expert other will support and challenge the learner within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is the area between what a learner can do alone, their actual development, and the highest level of what the learner may be able to do as an adult, their potential development. In order for learning to take place, the more expert other should target their instruction to take place within the learner's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Using dialogue journals, teachers can individualize their instruction by responding to each student within his or her zone of proximal development. The teacher acts as a more expert other, and through the social interactions in letters back and forth, is able to push students to cognitive levels of thinking they would be unable to reach alone. By prompting, questioning, and modeling in their written responses, teachers can guide their students into deeper understanding. Just as social constructivism requires students to take an active role in thinking and constructing new knowledge, reader response theory also asks students to be actively involved in learning and reaching new understandings.

Reader Response Theory

The responses recorded by students in their dialogue journals are supported by the work of Louise Rosenblatt (1978, 1982, 1995) in reader response theory. Dialogue journals are a forum for students to personally respond to the text that they are reading independently. The response a reader has to a text may be described as aesthetic or efferent (Rosenblatt, 1982). An aesthetic response is an emotional response and characterized by an ongoing “transaction” between the reader and the text. When readers respond aesthetically, they are continuously interacting with the text. An efferent response to a text is driven by cognitive purposes and may be characterized by a search for facts. Rosenblatt (1995) maintains that readers respond to a text on an efferent-aesthetic response continuum. A reader will blend aesthetic and efferent responses as they think about a text. Instructional practices should

emphasize and incorporate both efferent and aesthetic purposes for reading, and the dialogue journal is one instructional practice that promotes both efferent and aesthetic transactions with the text.

Looking through the lens of reader response theory, dialogue journals become an opportunity for students to write from their unique perspectives. Each child's unique perspective includes his or her personal insights, knowledge base, and past experiences. The background a reader brings to the reading event includes such factors as gender, ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic status (Rosenblatt, 1978). These factors make reading a highly unique event conditional to the circumstances of the reader at the time they are reading the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). These different backgrounds and factors result in multiple interpretations of the same text, and this is allowed for and encouraged within a responsible framework of reading (Rosenblatt, 1978). Dialogue journals permit differing interpretations of the same book, and the teacher has the option of determining if interpretations fall within a responsible framework. The teacher may ask or prompt students to expand upon their ideas or support their beliefs with evidence from the text. The way a student responds to or interprets a text is the make-up of their comprehension.

Comprehension

Engaged and Effective Reading

In order for students to practice productive independent reading, the students must be engaged in their reading choices. Students must also know how to act as an effective reader. Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, and Fountas (2005) describe effective readers as being capable of within, beyond, and about the text thinking. Following the descriptions of these three ways of thinking is a table adapted from Pinnell and Fountas (2009) outlining the strategic actions, or comprehension strategies, used to process a written text.

Thinking Within the Text

When a reader thinks within the text, he or she comprehends at the literal level. In the case of fiction, the reader must follow the story and be able to identify the characters. In the case of non-fiction, the reader must identify the topic and learn facts relating to that topic (Scharer et al., 2005). A reader must understand the text and be able to recall important information automatically; this may include recalling specific details or summarizing important information (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).

Thinking Beyond the Text

By combining the text with his or her own knowledge and experiences, the reader is able to think beyond the text. The reader uses his or her background knowledge and past experiences to make sense of the text. Beyond text thinking may include making predictions about the text and later confirming or rejecting those predictions based on what is read. Connecting with the characters and imagining their

feelings are also examples of beyond text thinking. A reader may “read between the lines” to infer what an author is implying but not directly saying (Scharer et al., 2005). When students think beyond the text, their interpretations of the same book may differ slightly from one another’s (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009). This phenomenon is consistent with reader response theory and the unique transactions each reader makes with the text.

Thinking About the Text

Thinking about the text is the highest level of thinking because it requires the reader to take a step back from the text. The reader may notice the author’s craft or appreciate the particular language that has been used. The reader might also critique the writing and offer admiration or condemnation. In non-fiction, the reader may distinguish the underlying text structure (e.g. compare/contrast). An observer may perceive the reader noticing organization features and using them to find information. This type of thinking and awareness may lead to better writing (Scharer et al., 2005). Whenever students indicate they like an author’s style, the subjects an author writes about, the way the story is organized or told, or an author’s use of language, they are thinking about the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009).

Supporting Effective Reading

Teachers must provide daily support in effective reading. This support comes during interactive read aloud, shared reading, and guided reading as well as independent reading. Interactive read aloud is a time for teachers to facilitate thoughtful discussion about text; students learn how to talk to one another about

books. During shared reading among a small group, discussion involves articulating thinking as it relates to a text. This opportunity extends understanding and reminds students that reading is about meaning. In guided reading, a teacher's book introduction may ask students to engage in all three types of thinking. During independent reading, teachers should be conferring with individual students (Scharer et al., 2005).

Table 2.1 Systems of Strategic Actions: Ways of Thinking Within, Beyond, About Texts¹

Ways of Thinking	Systems of Strategic Actions for Processing Written Texts	
Thinking Within the Text	Solving Words	Using a range of strategies to take words apart and understand what words mean when reading continuous text
	Monitoring and Correcting	Checking on whether reading sounds right, looks right, and makes sense
	Searching for and Using Information	Searching for and using all kinds of information in the text
	Summarizing	Putting together important information while reading, and disregarding irrelevant information
	Maintaining Fluency	Integrating sources of information in a smoothly operating process that results in expressive, phrased reading
	Adjusting	Reading in different ways as appropriate to the purpose for reading and the type of text
Thinking Beyond the Text	Predicting	Thinking about what will follow while reading continuous text
	Making Connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal • World • Text 	Searching for and using connections to knowledge gained through personal experiences, learning about the world, and reading other texts
	Synthesizing	Putting together information from the text and from background knowledge in order to create new understandings
	Inferring	Going beyond the literal meaning of a text to think about what is not there but is implied by the writer
Thinking About the Text	Analyzing	Examining elements of a text to know more about how it is constructed
	Critiquing	Evaluating a text based on personal, world, or text knowledge

¹ Note: Descriptions of within, beyond, about text thinking. Adapted from *When Readers Struggle: Teaching That Works* (p. 18), by G.S Pinnell and I.C. Fountas, 2009, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Extending Response through Writing

Dialogue journals are a written conference between teacher and student. Students' letters provide evidence of what type of thinking a student is engaging in while they read. If the teacher notices that a student is mostly summarizing what they have read, the teacher may prompt the student to write about personal connections they have made with a character. Findings from research studies looking at extending reading through written response suggest that when students continually write in the process of reading a text, they reach understandings beyond summarization or literal recall (Hancock, 1993). One of the largest factors in extending these written responses to higher levels of thinking is the teacher moves, or support coming from teachers through prompts, questions, or reinforcement (Hancock, 1993).

Dialogue Journals

Purpose and Topics of Dialogue Journals

Dialogue journals are informal written conversations between two people about a chosen topic over an extended period of time. The chosen topic of the dialogue journal can vary greatly based on the purpose the teacher has in mind for the exchange of letters. The purpose of the dialogue journal relates to the student population the teacher is working with; teachers have used dialogue journals with English language learners, special needs students, general education students, adult learners, pre-service teachers, among other populations. The purpose and topics discussed in the dialogue journals vary based on the needs of the student population.

When Anderson, Nelson, Richardson, Webb, and Young (2011) researched the use of dialogue journals with academically and behaviorally challenged students, the purpose of the dialogue journal was to build a relationship between the teacher and student. The topics of the letters were centered on the students' emotions about school, their home life, or their peers and coping with those feelings (Anderson et al., 2011).

The purpose of a dialogue journal exchange between a teacher and his or her English language learners may have a significantly different purpose than the one described above for academically and behaviorally challenged students. Holmes and Moulten (1997) investigated using dialogue journals as a learning strategy with ESL university students. The purpose of the dialogue journals was for the teacher to model fluent writing and the students to practice writing fluency. Because their purpose was to increase writing fluency, students could choose a topic that they were comfortable writing about.

In this study, the researcher will be exploring the use of dialogue journals with fourth grade students in a general education classroom. The purpose of the dialogue journal is to respond to literature, and the topics of students' letters will be dependent on their independent reading choices. Donna Werderich (2002, 2006) has completed several research studies looking into using dialogue journals to respond to literature with intermediate and middle school age students.

Using Dialogue Journals as a Response to Literature

Although dialogue journals have been used for a number of purposes, this study is most interested in reviewing research related to using dialogue journals as a response to literature. The research of Donna Werderich will factor greatly into this review because her purposes and the student populations she has worked with most closely match my own.

Werderich (2002) examined using dialogue journals as a means for differentiating reading instruction among seventh grade students in an advanced reading class. The study explored how teachers respond to students in dialogue journals and how dialogue journals were used to promote personalized learning. Journal entries from fifteen students and their teacher were analyzed during the course of a school year, and the following four teacher response patterns emerged: student interests, personal discoveries, setting challenges, and teaching strategies. These response patterns were seen to be the catalyst in promoting personalized reading instruction. The teacher's responses addressed personal student interests through author or genre recommendations. The teacher guided students through her questions and comments in making personal discoveries about the meaning of titles, author style, plot structure, and techniques of comprehending. The teacher always attempted to set challenges by asking a significant question to get the student thinking about the book he or she was reading; the developmental level of the student was an important factor in setting challenges. The teacher's responses were classified as teaching strategies whenever she included reinforcement of a skill taught during mini-

lessons in the readers' workshop. Werderich (2002) found that the one-on-one written conversation allowed the teacher to personalize learning for her students.

Werderich (2006) continued her research in using dialogue journals as a response to literature by examining how middle school teachers utilized dialogue journals and the processes they used to respond to students' written responses. Three middle school teachers, Mrs. C, Mrs. L, and Mr. D, and their 53 students participated in the study. By analyzing dialogue journals, teacher interview transcripts, and teacher observation notes, the researcher found the role of the teacher to be complex and ever-changing. Werderich (2006) described a response continuum upon which teacher responses fluctuated between being instructional, conversational, or instructional/conversational. Instructional responses included direct scaffolding or literacy understanding development. Conversational responses reflected more freedom for the teacher and student to experience literature. Werderich's (2006) findings suggest that dialogue journals were an effective way to individualize the literacy development of middle school students. The teachers felt they were engaging in an ongoing scaffolding process unique to the needs of their students.

Benefits and Challenges of Using Dialogue Journals

The benefits of using dialogue journals among different student populations, academically and behaviorally challenged students and English language learners included, were abundant. Regan (2003) supports using dialogue journals with emotionally disturbed students for the following four reasons: Dialogue journals encourage low-achieving students to engage in the writing process; dialogue journals

offer an opportunity for students to express their feelings appropriately; dialogue journals allow teachers to regularly teach and reinforce social skills in their responses; and dialogue journals strengthen the teacher-student relationship. English language learners have also experienced benefits in using dialogue journals. Holmes and Moulten (1997) saw an increase in writing fluency and motivation when using dialogue journals with ESL students in an urban university.

Using dialogue journals as a teaching practice is not without its challenges. Anderson et al. (2011) noted the period of time in which the teacher exchanged dialogue journals with her students needed to be extensive for growth in the relationship between teacher and student to occur. Holmes and Moulten (1997) acknowledge that writing in a dialogue journal is an extremely time-consuming task for the teacher. Although fluency was reported as increasing in English language learners' dialogue journals, it was not established whether that fluency transferred to any other writing contexts (Holmes & Moulten, 1997).

When dialogue journals are used for the purpose of responding to literature, there are benefits for both teachers and students. Werderich (2006) found that the three middle school literacy teachers were able to model quality journal responses and their students took on the belief that reading is thinking. Similarly to the academically and behaviorally challenged students, Werderich (2006) also found evidence of teachers forging strong relationships with their students as individuals. Teachers were able to model reading for pleasure, which in turn promoted lifelong reading practices to their students (Werderich, 2006).

There are also challenges to using dialogue journals for responding to literature. Due to the uniqueness of the dialogue journal process for each student, there is a lack of generalizability. Werderich (2006) warns that asking too many questions may hinder a student's ability to respond freely and aesthetically to the literature. Dialogue journals may become too teacher-dominated when the teacher should actually be acting as a facilitator (Werderich, 2006).

Summary

This chapter was a review of the literature that has influenced this study. The written exchange that takes place between teacher and student in dialogue journals leads to the type of learning that is consistent with the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978). The teacher acts as a more expert other, and through the social interactions in letters back and forth, is able to push students to cognitive levels of thinking they would be unable to reach alone. The responses recorded by students in their dialogue journals are supported by the work of Louise Rosenblatt (1978, 1982, 1995) in reader response theory. Dialogue journals become an opportunity for students to write from their unique perspectives. Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, and Fountas (2005) describe effective readers as being capable of within, beyond, and about the text thinking. The chosen topic of the dialogue journal can vary greatly based on the purpose the teacher has in mind for the exchange of letters. When dialogue journals were used as a response to literature, Werderich (2002) found that the one-on-one written conversation allowed the teacher to personalize learning for her students.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This inquiry-based research study was designed to explore the impact of using dialogue journals to support independent reading on students' learning as it relates to reading and writing. The methods in this study addressed how writing in dialogue journals supported students' understanding of their independent reading, writing for a specific audience, and critical appreciation of texts. This chapter defines the methods and procedures of the study by first describing the context of the school, classroom, and participants. The chapter then describes the data collection instruments and procedures for implementing those instruments in detail before delving into how the data will be analyzed.

Context

School

This study took place in a school district located within a rural community in Western New York. The school district was comprised of 1,201 students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. There were two buildings: an elementary school housing PreK-6 students and a junior/senior high school housing grades 7-12. The racial makeup of the students was 93 percent white, 5 percent Hispanic/Latino, and 2 percent African-American/black. In terms of socioeconomic status, 27 percent of students in the district were eligible for free lunch, and 11 percent of students were

eligible for reduced-price lunch. One percent of students were classified as limited English proficient (New York State Education Department, 2011).

The elementary school was a PreK-6 building, and in the 2009-2010 school-year, the total enrollment numbered 601 students. The student body was 91 percent white, 6 percent Hispanic/Latino, and 2 percent African-American/black. The elementary school had an average class size of twenty students, and there was a 96 percent attendance rate. At 46 percent, nearly half of the school qualified for free or reduced-priced lunch. One percent of students were classified as limited English proficient (New York State Education Department, 2011).

Fourth-Grade Class

The classroom within which this study took place was a fourth-grade general education classroom comprised of twenty-four students, ten male and fourteen female. Although these students were all white, they were diverse in the socioeconomic status of their families. The layout of the classroom consisted of six round tables that seated four students and a small rectangular table in the center of the room. On one wall, there was a whiteboard adjacent to a SMART Board, and on the opposite wall was another whiteboard. In addition to the SMART Board, the available technology included five computers, an overhead projector, and a CD player with headphones. There were several bulletin boards devoted to what the students were currently studying in science, mathematics, and social studies. The day was arranged so that there was a 15 minute block of time for spelling directly followed by guided reading/centers. While the teacher worked for a half hour with a guided reading

group, the other students worked at one of the following centers: computer, reading, writing, or listening. During the ELA hour-long block at the end of the day, the teacher worked from the Harcourt basal series on a reading passage, grammar skill, and focus skill.

The classroom teacher in this study was Lynn Vendetti, a veteran teacher of eighteen years who has spent fifteen of those years teaching in the school district featured in this study. She first earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology before attending graduate school to earn her Master of Science in Elementary and Special Education. She is certified to teach grades PreK-6. Mrs. Vendetti opened her classroom to the researcher, Kylie Armstrong, for her thesis project on using dialogue journals in conjunction with independent reading to support student learning.

Participants

This study featured eight focal children from Mrs. Vendetti's fourth grade classroom. Lena was a nine-year-old white female. She was a highly motivated, energetic learner and described as being very creative and inquisitive. She aspired to write for the school newspaper and was an above-average learner in reading and mathematics. At the end of third grade, she scored at the sixth grade level on the Basic Reading Inventory (BRI), and her score of 703 placed her within the level four performance range on the New York State (NYS) English Language Arts (ELA) assessment. Lena also performed within the level four range on the NYS mathematics assessment.

Cameron was a nine-year old white male and an above-average learner in reading and mathematics. He was a motivated, cooperative student and well-liked by his peers. There were mild health concerns with intestinal issues, but this did not affect his school achievement. At the end of third grade, he scored at the fourth grade level on the BRI, and his score of 696 placed him within the level four performance range on the NYS ELA assessment. Cameron also performed within the level four range on the NYS mathematics assessment.

Jane was a nine-year-old white female and a slightly above-average learner in reading and mathematics. Jane was a sweet girl with an infectious smile. She was a hard-worker and always put in her best effort. At the end of third grade, Jane scored a 691 on the NYS ELA assessment, which placed her in the level three performance range. She also performed within the level three range on the NYS mathematics assessment.

Ethan was a nine-year-old white male and a slightly above-average learner in reading and mathematics. Ethan was described by his peers and his teacher as a “smart-aleck.” He was sarcastic in nature, which caused some friction with his classmates; however, he is well-liked by his male peers. Ethan was an avid reader of fantasy-based fiction. At the end of third grade, Ethan scored a 687 on the NYS ELA assessment, which placed him within the level three performance range. Ethan also performed within the level three performance range on the NYS mathematics assessment.

Nora was a nine-year-old white female and an average learner in reading and mathematics. Nora was a hard-worker but unorganized when it came to keeping her schoolwork together. Her belongings were spread out around her table area, and she would often lose homework that she had completed. At the end of third grade, Nora scored a 659 on the NYS ELA assessment, which placed her within the level two performance range. Nora also performed within the level two performance range on the NYS mathematics assessment.

Mason was a nine-year-old white male and a slightly above-average learner in reading and mathematics. Mason was a nice, funny boy. He often needed reminders for appropriate behavior due to his class clown antics. Mason did not view himself as a reader and would often describe it as “boring.” At the end of third grade, Mason scored a 680 on the NYS ELA assessment, which placed him in the level three performance range. Mason also scored within the level three performance range on the NYS mathematics assessment.

Anna was a nine-year-old white female and an average learner in reading and mathematics. She was a nice, polite girl and was very responsible. She had anxiety speaking in small and large groups but gained confidence as the year progressed. She struggled with time management and usually needed extra time to finish assignments and tests. As a part of Response to Intervention (RTI), Anna was classified as Tier 2 and received 30 minutes of pull-out reading instruction. At the end of third grade, she scored an instructional level 38 on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). On the third grade NYS ELA assessment, Anna’s score of 661 placed her within the

level two performance range. She also performed within the level two range on the NYS mathematics assessment.

Gavin was a nine-year-old white male and an average learner in reading and mathematics. He was a quiet, serious boy and his teacher described him as very cooperative and nice. He needed close monitoring for organizational and responsibility skills. A major concern with Gavin was his weak attendance and tardiness rate. In third grade, he missed 48 days of school. He scored at the fourth grade level on the BRI at the end of third grade. Gavin's score of 656 placed him within the level two performance range on the NYS ELA assessment. Gavin performed within the level three range on the NYS mathematics assessment.

Miss Armstrong earned her Bachelor of Science in Education and is certified to teach grades PreK-6. She is currently completing her Master of Science in Education with a major in childhood literacy. She has student-taught in the school district featured in this study and is also a substitute teacher.

Data Collection Instruments

Several data collection instruments were used to explore the impact of dialogue journals on student learning. Data was gathered from multiple sources of information including observations, students' journal writing samples, teacher's journal feedback, and interviews.

Observations

Each week I conducted two observations in the fourth grade classroom. These observations took place during the time designated for guided reading and centers. Using the field note observation form as a guide (see Appendix A), I recorded notes related to the focal children's observable behaviors in using dialogue journals and their engagement with their independent reading. These observations took place for the duration of the study.

Students' Journal Writing Samples and Teacher's Journal Feedback

At the end of each week, I collected and scanned copies of the entries the students and their teacher had added to the dialogue journals. Any information or names revealing the students' identities was deleted. In these journal entries, I looked for evidence of students' understanding of their independent reading as well as their use of teacher feedback. I also intended to find demonstration of a critical appreciation for reading.

Interviews

In the final week of the study, I conducted an interview with each focal child to learn additional information and add reliability to what I have observed. The interview was semi-structured and consisted of at least eight questions (see Appendix B). If a follow-up question pertinent to the study arose from a student's answer, I followed that path of thinking.

Procedures

The study was planned to take place for five weeks as seen in Table 3.1.

During the first four weeks, I conducted observations every Monday and Wednesday.

For the duration of the study, each Friday I scanned copies of the students' writing samples and teacher feedback in the dialogue journal entries. During the final fifth week, I administered an interview with each of the eight focal children.

Table 3.1	
Week	Research Schedule
One	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Conduct two observations❖ Collect and scan dialogue journals
Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Conduct two observations❖ Collect and scan dialogue journals
Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Conduct two observations❖ Collect and scan dialogue journals
Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Conduct two observations❖ Collect and scan dialogue journals
Five	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Conduct one observation❖ Collect and scan dialogue journals❖ Administer interviews with focal children

Data Analysis

The analytical framework for this study included the demonstration of reading comprehension through writing, writing for a specific audience, and demonstrating critical appreciation of texts, and I coded my findings based on this framework. The study drew from multiple domains of data to increase the validity of the findings, and each question was answered according to multiple domains or sources of data. This triangulation of data helped to increase the reliability of the study.

The first research question asked how writing in a dialogue journal supports students' understanding of their independent reading. Active engagement with the text is a precursor to comprehension and understanding. Each observation field note was coded for students' visible engagement with their independent reading as well as their engagement with writing. The students were provided with a two-sided bookmark that lists ideas to jumpstart their thinking on what to write about in their dialogue journal (see Appendix C). The observer looked for evidence of the students using the "Connect with the Book" side of the bookmark. The students' dialogue journal entries were collected as artifacts and their writing was coded for within and beyond text thinking (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Within-text thinking is characteristic of literal recall while beyond-text thinking demonstrates deeper understanding. Students' answers to interview questions were analyzed and coded for student thinking related to how dialogue journals support their understanding of their independent reading.

The second research question inquired about how writing in a dialogue journal supports writing for a specific audience. In any school-based writing, whether it is comprehension test questions or informal journal entries, students must be aware of their audience and articulate their thoughts effectively. This question sought to answer how students write for the specific audience of their teacher. During my observations, I looked at students' visible use of teacher feedback like reading or rereading the letter from their teacher. I also looked for evidence of students using the dialogue journal checklist (see Appendix D), which denotes what the teacher, as their audience, is looking for. In the students' dialogue journals, I coded any teacher prompts or questions, and then highlighted if the student used that feedback in the following entry. I reviewed the dialogue journal entries to see whether the student had addressed the needs of their audience based on the dialogue journal checklist. In the interviews with the focal children, I asked how they decided what to write about, how they used their teacher's feedback, and how they used the checklist in order to better inform my observations and findings in their work samples.

The third research question asked how writing in a dialogue journal supports students' critical appreciation of their reading. The dialogue journal gives readers a forum for writing about and discussing their reading. They may use their dialogue journal to write about favorable or unfavorable opinions of their reading. During my observations, I looked for students' positive or negative behaviors and listened for comments that helped me to gauge their critical feelings toward their current book choice. I also looked for visible use of the "Analyze and Critique the Book" side of

the bookmark (see Appendix C). In my observations, I looked for students' attitudes toward the dialogue journal center. In students' dialogue journal entries, I coded any about text thinking (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). This about text thinking includes any writing that expresses criticism of the book or analysis of the author's craft. In the interviews, I asked students about their feelings about the dialogue journaling process as well as their feelings about writing about reading. To demonstrate critical thinking and appreciation for books, the students must form opinions about the book or the process and support them with evidence.

Summary

This inquiry-based research study was designed to explore the impact of using dialogue journals to support independent reading on students' learning as it relates to reading and writing. The methods in this study addressed how writing in dialogue journals supports students' understanding of their independent reading, writing for a specific audience, and critical appreciation of books and reading attitude. This study took place in a school district located within a rural community in Western New York comprised of 1,201 students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. There were two buildings: an elementary school housing PreK-6 students and a junior/senior high school housing grades 7-12. The classroom within which this study took place is a fourth-grade general education classroom comprised of twenty-four students, ten male and fourteen female. The study featured the following eight focal students from veteran teacher Mrs. Vendetti's fourth-grade classroom: Lena, an above-average

learner; Cameron, an above-average learner; Jane, a slightly above-average learner; Ethan, a slightly above-average learner; Nora, an average learner; Mason, a slightly above-average learner; Anna, an average learner; and Gavin, an average learner. Data was gathered from multiple sources of information including observations, students' journal writing samples, teacher's journal feedback, and interviews. During the first four weeks, I conducted observations every Monday and Wednesday. For the duration of the study, each Friday I made scans of the students' writing samples and teacher feedback in the dialogue journal entries, and during the final fifth week, I administered an interview with each of the focal children. The analytical framework for this study included the demonstration of reading comprehension through writing, and I coded my findings based on this framework. Understanding of reading, writing for an audience, and critical thinking about the text will be coded.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

This study focused on the uses of dialogue journals in supporting fourth graders during independent reading. This chapter will describe these findings through the analysis of the observations and interviews conducted by the researcher as well as the students' responses and teacher feedback recorded in dialogue journals.

This chapter is organized around the overarching research question asked in Chapter One inquiring how using a dialogue to support independent reading will impact students' learning as well as the three accompanying sub-questions seeking to answer how writing in a dialogue journal supports students' understanding of the independent reading, writing for a specific audience, and critical appreciation of books and reading attitude. The following three sections will examine and be organized around those three sub-questions. The final section will be a summary of the results.

How does writing in a dialogue journal support students' understanding of their independent reading?

Students' understanding of their independent reading was measured through their observed engagement with reading and writing, the within and beyond text thinking demonstrated in their dialogue journals, and their responses to interview questions related to comprehension.

Engagement with Reading and Writing

Nine observations were conducted in Lynn Vendetti's fourth grade classroom during the time designated for dialogue journals. In the dialogue journal center, students spent fifteen minutes reading from their independent reading choice and then responded in their dialogue journal. For the first fifteen minutes of these observations, I watched for students' engagement with their independent reading. For the following fifteen minutes, I observed students as they wrote responses in their dialogue journals.

According to Scharer, Pinnell, Lyons, and Fountas (2005), a student must act as an effective, engaged reader to practice productive reading. Therefore, during my observations, I was looking for the students' engagement with their texts that is the precursor to comprehension.

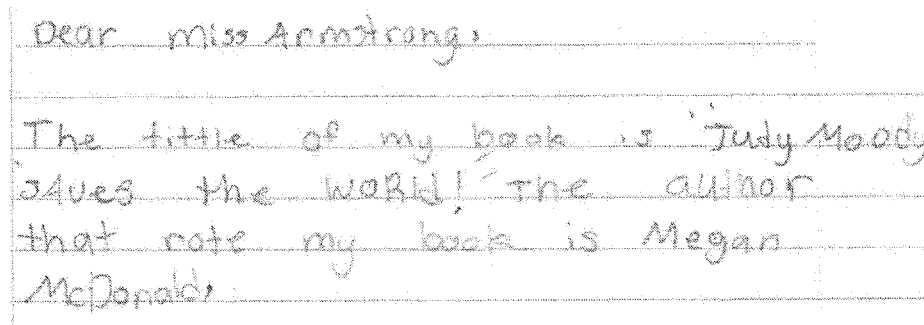
Students who were engaged in neither their reading nor writing were more likely to produce vague entries that lacked deeper thinking and demonstration of comprehension. The following are excerpts taken from my field note observation forms related to Anna's engagement with the reading and writing process. In the first observation, Anna demonstrated some very severe avoidance behaviors that negatively affected her reading comprehension.

Anna was the last student to select a book and spent most of the fifteen minutes for reading looking around the classroom library. She would select a book, take a step towards her seat, then turn around, and put it back. This process went on nearly the entire fifteen minutes allotted for reading. (Reading Engagement; Observation 1)

Anna continued reading before being given a reminder to start writing. She opened her journal then got out her chap stick. She received another reminder. She wrote the date and greeting and checked those items off the list. (Writing Engagement; Observation 1)

The letter Anna wrote during this first observation contained no instances of within, beyond, or about text thinking. She had only a greeting, the title, and the author of the book recorded.

Illustration 4.1: Anna Dialogue Journal Letter 1

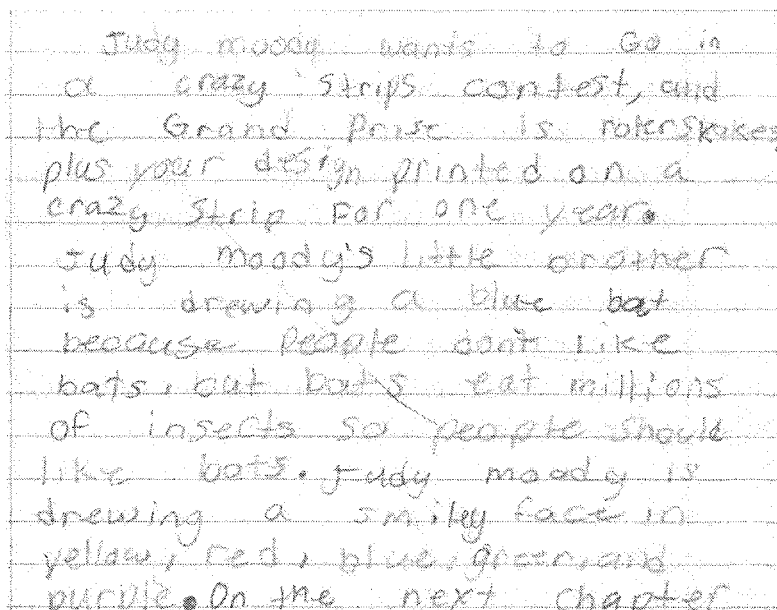


In the second observation, she engaged with her reading but again exhibited avoidance behaviors when it came to writing; however, after a prompt for a verbal explanation of what she had read was given, Anna was able to successfully engage in writing in her dialogue journal. Prompting Anna with a verbal explanation first was the scaffolding she needed to transition into a written explanation of her book. In her second dialogue journal letter, Anna describes in detail the contest that the characters in her story will be entering and the designs they will be submitting.

Anna pulled the book she started last week out of her pouch and immediately began reading. Anna had much more time to read when she already had a book picked out. (Reading Engagement; Observation 2)

Anna asked to use the bathroom before starting to write. She returned and sat staring at the page and flipping between pages. When I came over to prompt her to write, she had the date and greeting. I asked her what her book was about, and she gave me a verbal explanation about the contest Judy Moody and her brother are in. I asked her if she could write about that contest in her journal, and she nodded yes. (Writing Engagement; Observation 2)

Illustration 4.2: Anna Dialogue Journal Letter 2



Judy Moody wants to go in
a crazy strips contest, and
the Grand Prize is roller skates,
plus your design printed on a
crazy strip for one year.
Judy Moody's little brother
is drawing a blue bat
because people don't like
bats, but bats eat millions
of insects so people should
like bats. Judy Moody is
drawing a smiley face in
yellow, red, blue, green, and
purple. On the next chapter

By the fifth observation, Anna was looking much more comfortable as an engaged reader and writer. The engagement she was showing with her reading and writing placed her in the position to demonstrate her comprehension. Anna recognized the importance of being engaged in her book choice during her interview.

Anna's bookmark shows she is about halfway through her Judy Moody book. She read quietly before beginning her letter. Anna is comfortably engaged both as a reader and a writer.

(Reading and Writing Engagement; Observation 5)

How does writing in a dialogue journal help you understand your book?

It helps me understand my book better because I have to write down what is going on in my book. I have to pay attention.

(Reading and Writing Engagement; Anna Interview Question 1)

If a student was engaged with his or her reading, it did not necessarily mean that he or she would be engaged in their writing. The main means of demonstrating

comprehension is through writing, and those who did not engage in the writing could only superficially discuss what they had read. Mason showed wonderful engagement with his reading; however, the time he spent writing his dialogue journal letters shows he was more focused on finishing than demonstrating comprehension. The following excerpts are taken from observation field notes related to Mason's reading and writing engagement.

Mason immediately pulled out his R.L Stine book from the previous week. Mason showed engagement with reading his R.L. Stine book.
(Reading Engagement; Observation 2)

Mason finished his journal entry early.
(Writing Engagement; Observation 2)

Mason immediately began writing his letter about *How to Eat Fried Worms* after returning his book and was done quickly. Although Mason shows a great attitude toward reading, I think he could spend more time on his writing.
(Writing Engagement; Observation 5)

Students who were not engaged in their reading but were in their writing were also more likely to produce vague entries that lacked demonstrations of comprehension. Certain students on some days would go straight to writing in their dialogue journals. This could be because they had taken their book home to read and forgotten to bring it back in, or they were reading their book on a Kindle at home that could not be brought to school. Students who were not engaged in their reading just prior to writing in their dialogue journals were less likely to demonstrate within or beyond text thinking.

On the day of my fourth observation, Nora asked if she could start her letter right away about the book she was reading on her Kindle. The resulting letter is very

vague. Nora calls the book interesting, but she does not give any details to support that opinion.

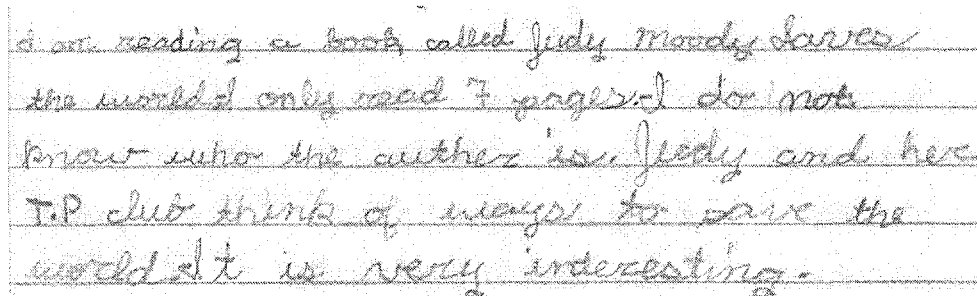
Nora: "I got a kindle for Christmas, and the book I am reading is on it. Is it okay if I just start my letter?"

Teacher: "Do you feel like you can remember your book enough to write about it?"

Nora: "Yes." Nora wrote steadily for about fifteen minutes. I could see her neat, precise cursive.

(Writing Engagement; Observation 4)

Illustration 4.3: Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 4



I am reading a book called Judy Moody Loves
the World I only read 7 pages. I do not
know who the author is. Judy and her
T.P. club think of ways to save the
world. It is very interesting.

Students who were engaged in both their reading and writing were more likely to have produced dialogue journal letters that demonstrated comprehension. In the case of Jane, she preferred to both read and write at the same time. She would read, write about what she had read, and return to her reading during the course of the half hour center for dialogue journals. The following excerpts are taken from observation field notes related to Jane's reading and writing engagement. In Observation 2, Jane demonstrated comprehension as she was engaged and thinking about her reading. She made a prediction, rejected it, and then confirmed it again. Her dialogue journal entry contained those same thoughts.

Jane was writing and reading at the same time. She called me over to show me that she had first thought the story was about Jesus, then thought it was actually about kittens being born, then confirmed that she was right the first time. (Reading and Writing Engagement; Observation 2)

Jane tried out her reading and writing approach again in Observation 5. This time she used differently colored pens to track her thoughts each time she stopped to write, and her resulting letter demonstrated both within and beyond text thinking. Jane was clearly constructing meaning from the text as she read.

Jane: "Can I read and write at the same time?"

Teacher: "You can try it that way today. Stop to record your thoughts about something you read before you start reading again."

(Reading and Writing Engagement; Observation 5)

Each time Jane paused to write, she used a different color pen to record her thoughts. Jane's color-coded approach will give me a look into the way she organizes her thoughts.

(Reading and Writing Engagement; Observation 5)

Ethan is an avid reader of books in the fantasy genre, and observing him reading showed the engagement necessary to comprehend a text. In the first and third observations, Ethan showed comfort in engaging with reading for an extended period of time.

Ethan pulled book out of his pouch and had his head on his elbow, grasping book in one hand. Ethan was very engaged in his reading and seemed very comfortable with reading for an extended period of time. (Reading Engagement; Observation 1)

Ethan showed me the book he had brought from home that he is still reading. He read steadily and quietly for fifteen minutes in his typical slouched over position. (Reading Engagement; Observation 3)

Ethan spends time constructing his dialogue journal letters as evidenced in Observation 4.

Ethan got right to work on his letter, and he spent nearly fifteen minutes writing it. Ethan is very engaged with writing in his dialogue journal.
(Writing Engagement; Observation 4)

Ethan does much of his reading at home, and he would sometimes forget to bring his book to school. When he does remember to bring his book like he did in Observation 6, he is very engaged, or absorbed, in his reading. He is also engaged in his writing, and he often demonstrates beyond text thinking by wondering about will happen next in his series.

Ethan: "I remembered my book today!" Holds it up high in the air.
Ethan read in his usual slouched over state. He kept reading until students were asked to find a stopping point and start their letter. He becomes absorbed in what he is reading. He needed to be prompted to begin his letter.
(Reading Engagement; Observation 6)

Within Text Thinking

Each instance of within text thinking was highlighted and coded in students' dialogue journals. In their dialogue journals, all students demonstrated within text thinking, or literal comprehension. The types of within text thinking demonstrated included both retelling details from the text and summarizing important information.

When writing in a dialogue journal was first introduced, many students' letters consisted solely of within text thinking. In her first letter, Nora is very vague as she sums up what her book is mainly about. Nora made it clear in her interview that summarizing what happens in her book is a step she takes when deciding what to write about in her dialogue journal.

Illustration 4.4: Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 1

I am reading a book called Dolphin Tale. By Gabrielle Reyes. It is based on a true story. It is about a Dolphin whose tail gets cut off by a crab trap. The Dolphins name is Winter. That's my book!

How do you decide what to write about in your dialogue journal?

First I'll go through your letter to answer any questions. Then I usually talk about what book I'm reading and I will summarize what happens in the book. (Summarizes; Nora Interview Question 2)

Students reading nonfiction showed a greater tendency to solely retell or summarize in their letters. In his second dialogue journal letter, Cameron wrote about a nonfiction text he had been reading about NFL players. He simply listed the names and number of years the football players had been in the NFL.

Illustration 4.5: Cameron Dialogue Journal Letter 3

I have just read about N.F.L. 12 is best players. Here are there names and years in football are Tony Roma 7 years, Matt Schan 6 years, Chris Johnson 2 years, P. Popp 1 year, Cribb 5 years, Tony Longley 13 years, Steve Smith 3 years, Dwight Freeman 8 years.

Over the course of several weeks, Gavin was reading a "How To" book. He seemed to copy directly from the book the parts of the passage he found important in his literal retelling. In his interview, Gavin revealed that he often has to narrow his writing down to what he thinks are the best details.

Illustration 4.6: Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 1

I read How to survive almost
 anything. Storm Calculator
 When you hear thunder count
 the seconds when lightning
 flashes divide it by 5.
 This is on p. 9. (EX) "Boom" 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,
 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, "Flash", $10 \div 5 = 2$ miles
 away. Hide and crouch when
 outside in a storm. (Hint) Lightning
 strikes the highest thing don't let
 it be you!

Illustration 4.7: Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 2

I'm reading how to survive
 bullies on this page. #1 Ignore
 the bully. (EX) bully: loser!
 Kid: [??] #2 use reverse psychology
 that means do the opposite. EX:
 bully: loser! Kid: I want to lose.
 #3 agree with the bully.
 (EX) Weirdo! Kid: Thanks for
 giving a compliment.

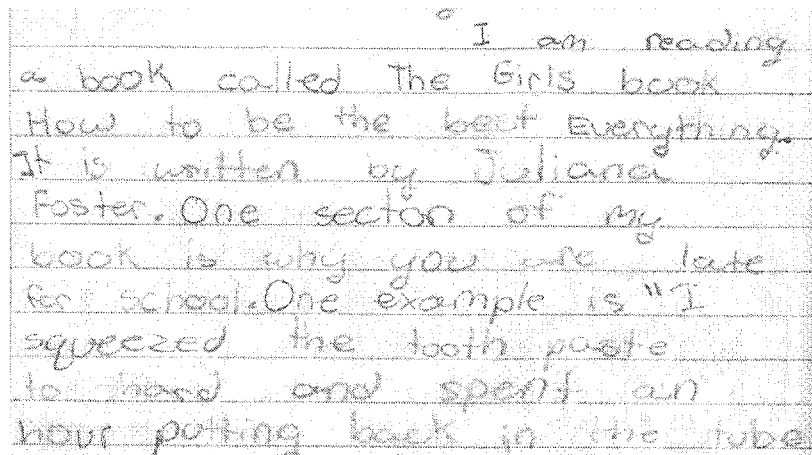
How do you decide what to write about in your dialogue journal?

There are tons of details in my books so I have to pick out the best details to write down in my journal.

(Within Text Thinking; Gavin Interview Question 2)

Nora also read a “How To” book, and her second letter also retells information straight from the text.

Illustration 4.8: Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 2



I am reading a book called The Girls book How to be the best Everything. It is written by Julianne Foster. One section of my book is why you are late for school. One example is "I squeezed the tooth paste to hard and spent an hour putting back in the tube."

Beyond Text Thinking

The dialogue journal letters were analyzed and coded for instances of beyond text thinking. Four types of beyond text thinking emerged from the students' journal entries including questioning, predicting, inferring, and making connections. As the students became more comfortable with the process of reading and writing in their journals, the retellings and summaries were accompanied by instances of beyond text thinking. The following are examples of beyond text thinking that the students demonstrated on their own without any elicitation from the teacher's feedback. Most of the examples come from higher-achieving students.

Questioning

In the cases of these students' dialogue journals, questioning was very similar to prediction. Students would sometimes explicitly state a question asking what might happen next in the story as Cameron did in his first dialogue journal letter. Cameron kept up with the action in the story by asking questions about what might happen next.

Illustration 4.9: Cameron Dialogue Journal Letter 1

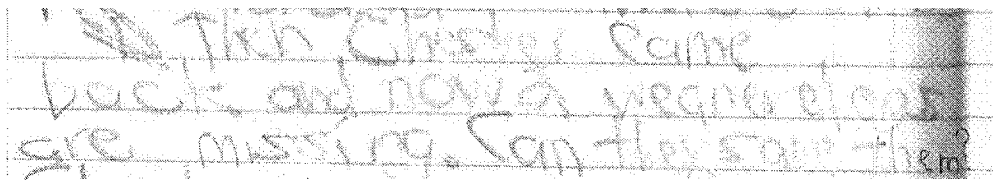
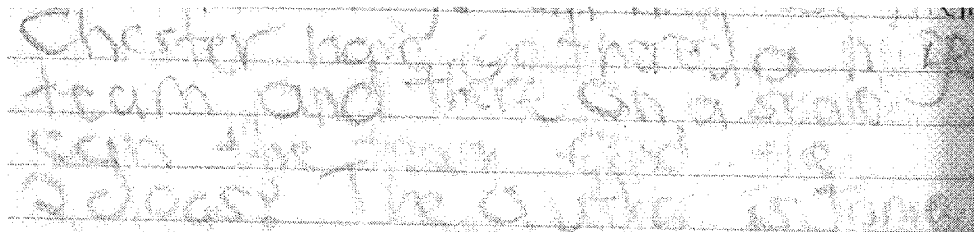


Illustration 4.10: Cameron Dialogue Journal Letter 1



Other times students would write "I wonder..." questions as they contemplated the coming events in the story as Ethan did in his fourth and sixth dialogue journal letters and Jane did in her fourth. Ethan and Jane were thinking about the events of the story and what might happen as a result.

Illustration 4.11: Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 4

Trek just told him from
downtown in mvd. I wonder
what's going to happen
next.

Illustration 4.12: Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 6

They find a new family
of trolls and was called Anna.
he's got a couple of kids I wonder
how it's gonna turn out.

Illustration 4.13: Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 4

Sarah took them to her aunt's
house to stay. I wonder how
she going to explain how she
knows Annie and Caleb because
the aunts never knew Sarah got
married to someone with kids.

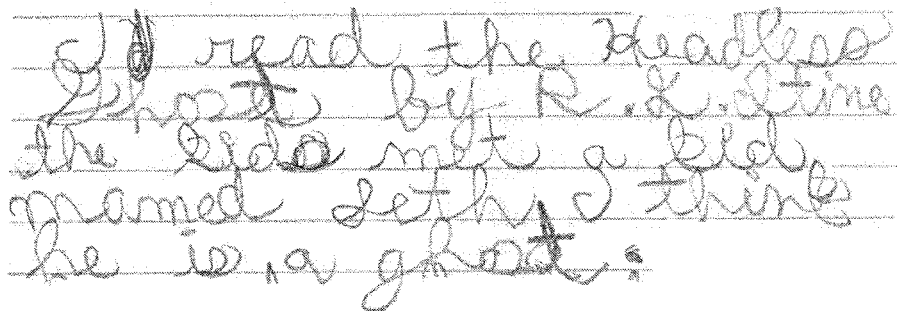
Illustration 4.14: Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 4

I wonder if the aunts are
going to like Caleb and Anna
aka Annie.

Predicting

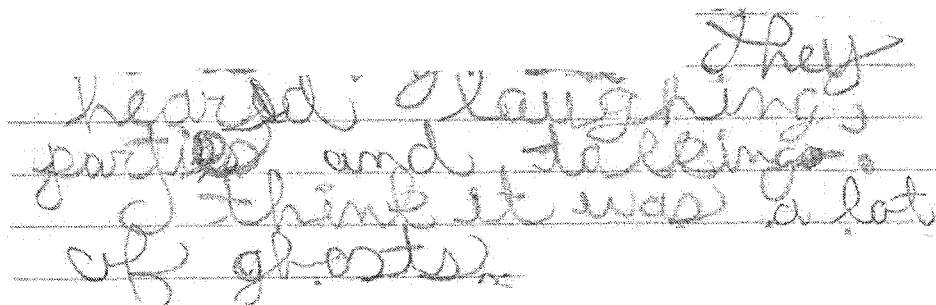
Efficient readers make predictions as they read and are able to reject or confirm them with evidence from the text. The two students who made predictions were two of the students who would also ask questions as they read. In his sixth dialogue journal letter, Cameron made two predictions about the characters in the story. In her second dialogue journal letter, Jane first made a prediction, rejected the prediction, and then confirmed that she was actually correct the first time. In her interview, Nora noted how writing in her dialogue journal has made her think more about what could happen next.

Illustration 4.15: Cameron Dialogue Journal Letter 6



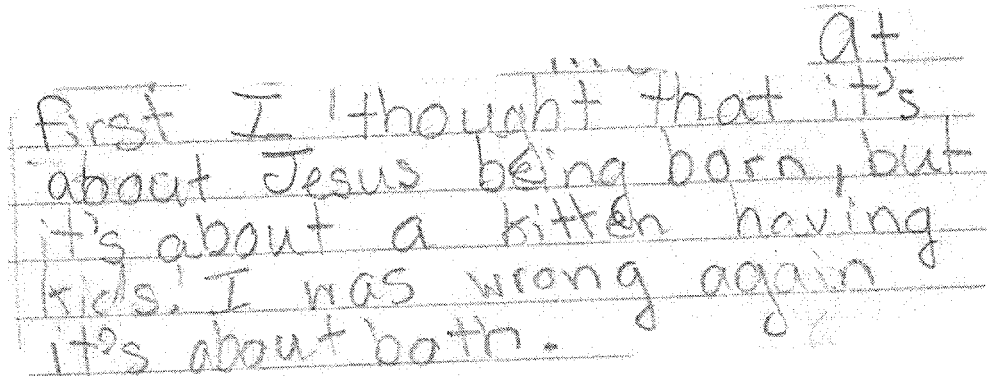
I read the Headless
Ghost by R.L. Stine
the Lida met a kid
named Seth. I think
he is a ghost.

Illustration 4.16: Cameron Dialogue Journal Letter 6



They
heard laughing
parties and talking.
I think it was a lot
of ghosts.

Illustration 4.17: Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 2



First I thought that it's ^{at} about Jesus being born, but it's about a kitten having kids. I was wrong again it's about both.

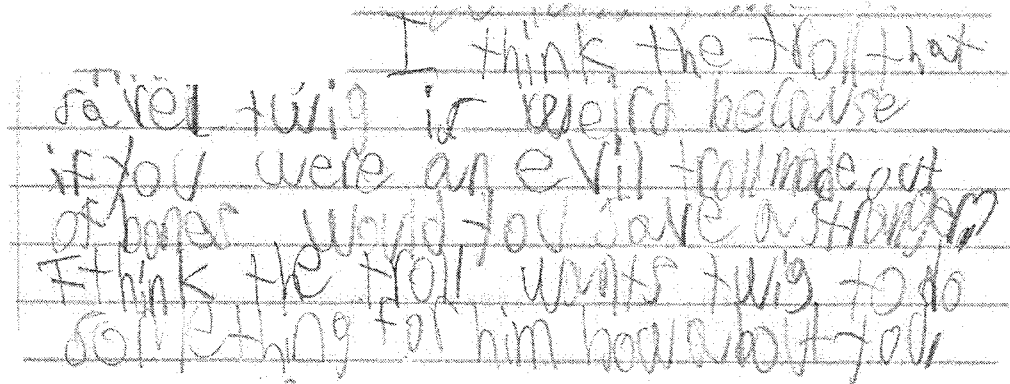
How has writing in your dialogue journal affected your thinking as you read your book?

Knowing that I have to write in my journal makes me think and understand more. I think about what will happen and make predictions.
(Prediction; Nora Interview Question 3)

Inferring

Students need to be able to infer, or “read between the lines,” to comprehend their text. When a student infers, they are taking what they already know and combining it with what they have read in order to form a unique interpretation of the text. Students who made inferences were often farther along in their chosen text, and the text was usually fiction. The following is an excerpt of an inference made by Ethan in his fifth dialogue journal letter. Ethan takes the knowledge he has of villains and their ulterior motives and infers that if an evil troll chooses to help someone, he must want something in return.

Illustration 4.18: Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 5



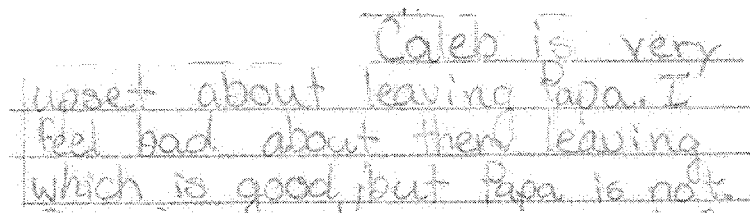
I think the troll that
saved twig is weird because
if you were an evil troll made out
of bones would you save a stranger?
I think the troll wants twig to do
something for him how about you?

Making Connections

Making connections occurs when readers connect new knowledge from the text with their prior knowledge. Connections may be made to one's self (text to self), to another text (text to text), or to an event or idea in the world (text to world). Connecting with characters and imagining their feelings are also examples of making connections.

Jane became very adept at making connections with the characters in *Skylark* by Patricia MacLachlan. The family had made the tough decision to leave the prairie during a drought while Papa stayed behind with the land, and Jane connected with the sadness of this separation. She also places herself in the character's shoes as she imagines their feelings.

Illustration 4.19: Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 4



Caleb is very
upset about leaving Papa. I
feel bad about them leaving
which is good, but Papa is not.

Illustration 4.20: Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 4

Caleb
is crying about the water I
would be in if I were him.

Illustration 4.21: Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 5

Poor Caleb he is dreaming
about Papa, he misses him
so much. I wish the family
could reunite. Sadly, they
can't because Papa's at the
Prarie and Sarah, Caleb, Anna
are in Maine.

Illustration 4.22: Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 6

It's so sad to read about a
family being split up in
different states.

Gavin made a text to self connection in his third dialogue journal letter. He was reading a passage about not talking on a cell phone when you cross the street, and he commented that even he should pay attention to this survival tip because he is the owner of a cell phone.

Illustration 4.23: Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 3

Don't cross the street
with a phone. Even me
I have a phone. Beta

Illustration 4.24: Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 3

To keep a
phone in a pocket. I
will to.

Beyond Text Thinking and Teacher Feedback

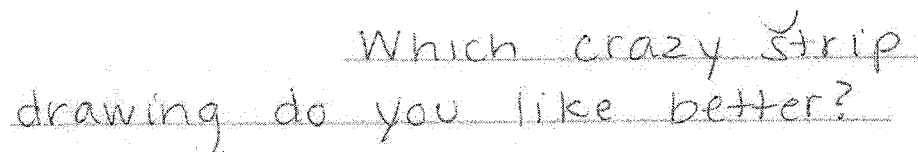
Many times instances of beyond text thinking coincided with prompts or questions from the teacher feedback. This is important to note because it is in alignment with the belief that the teacher can scaffold student thinking through carefully constructed questions or prompts. Although several higher-achieving students demonstrated beyond text thinking on their own, all students no matter their achievement level were able to demonstrate beyond text thinking when responding to the written feedback from the teacher.

Making connections was the type of beyond text thinking most often elicited by the teacher feedback; however, the teacher feedback also led to some instances of inferring. For students who solely demonstrated within text thinking, asking them to make connections was a natural step in scaffolding their thinking. Anna, Gavin, Mason, and Nora commonly produced either vague journal entries or letters that

focused solely on retelling information. With prompting for the teacher, they each demonstrated beyond text thinking by making connections.

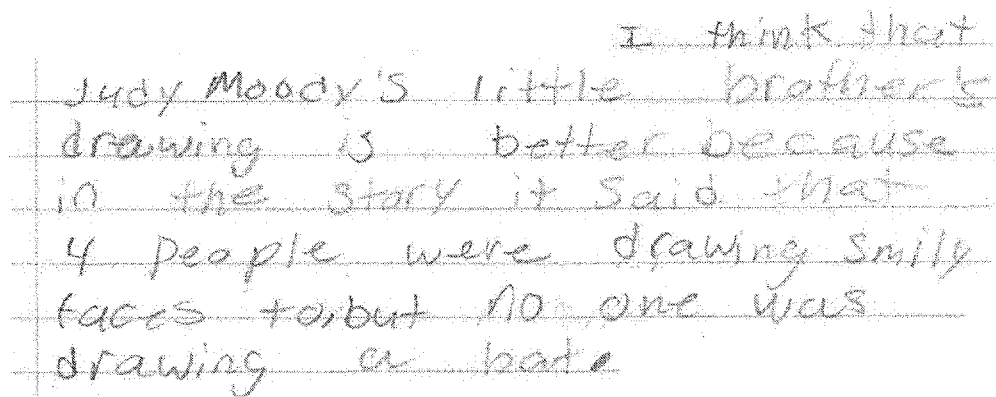
In Anna's third letter, she responded to the teacher's question by siding with which character she thought should win the crazy strips contest. She also provided a reason for her opinion.

Illustration 4.25: Anna Teacher Response 2



Which crazy strip
drawing do you like better?

Illustration 4.26: Anna Dialogue Journal Letter 3



I think that
Judy Moody's little brother's
drawing is better because
in the story it said that
4 people were drawing smiley
faces to, but no one was
drawing a bad one

Anna connected with the character in her text again when she responded to whether Judy got a good animal for her class project.

Illustration 4.27: Anna Teacher Response 3

I can't believe that even though Judy was the first one to raise her hand, she was the last one who got to pick an animal.

Did she get to pick an animal she liked still?

Illustration 4.28: Anna Dialogue Journal Letter 4

Judy did not get a good animal. Judy got a good animal. north east beach tiger parties.

Although his response is very succinct, Gavin made a text-to-self connection when he responded to my question about whether he would ever use the survival tips described in his book. His answer of yes shows that he finds the author's tips to be useful in his own life.

Illustration 4.29: Gavin Teacher Response 1

Illustration 4.30: Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 2

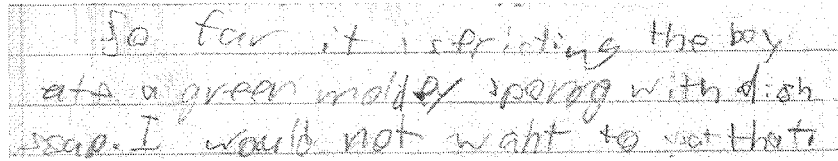
Mason described an incident about a snake being on a boy's leg in his R.L. Stine book. In my response, I probed him to think about this incident further by asking how he would feel about having a snake on his leg. Mason then made a text-to-self connection in his next response.

Illustration 4.31: Mason Teacher Response 1

Illustration 4.32: Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 2

Interestingly, in this same letter, Mason described an incident in the book and made a text-to-self connection on his own. Through scaffolding, Mason was able to pick up on the type of thinking I was looking for in these journals.

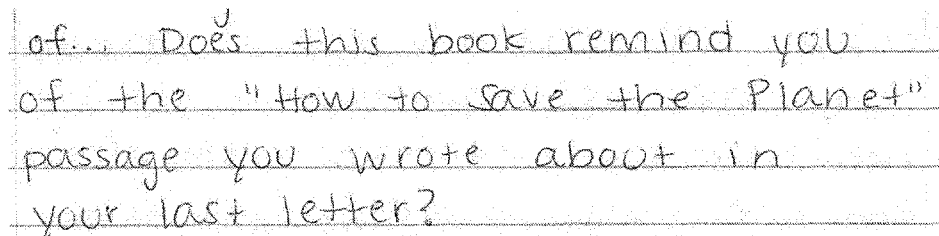
Illustration 4.33: Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 2



So far it is printing the boy
at a green moldy spring with dish
soap. I would not want to eat that.

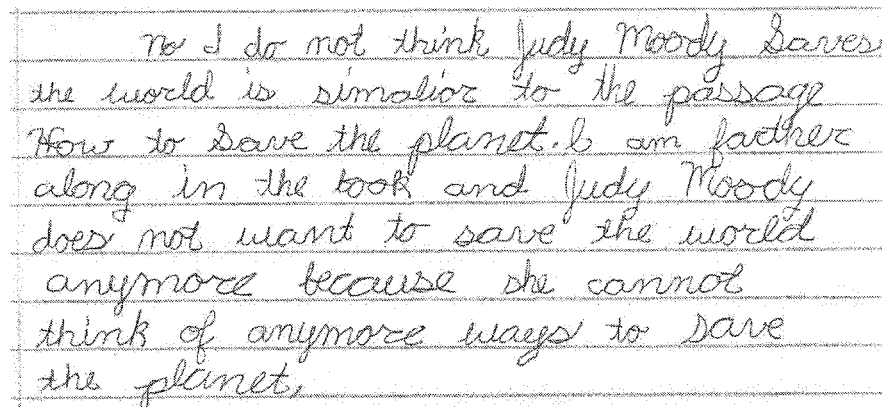
After noting the similarity of the titles of two texts Nora had read, I questioned her to see whether the two texts reminded her of one another. This triggered Nora to note a lack of a text-to-text connection between these two texts.

Illustration 4.34: Nora Teacher Response 4



of... Does this book remind you
of the "How to Save the Planet"
passage you wrote about in
your last letter?

Illustration 4.35: Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 5



No I do not think Judy Moody Saves
the world is similar to the passage
How to Save the planet. I am farther
along in the book and Judy Moody
does not want to save the world
anymore because she cannot
think of anymore ways to save
the planet.

Common Patterns Across Focal Children for Understanding Independent Reading

Students who were engaged in both their reading and writing were more likely to have produced dialogue journal letters that demonstrated comprehension. These students were more likely to be the higher-achieving students like Jane and Ethan.

Students who were engaged in neither their reading nor writing, reading but not writing, or writing but not reading were more likely to produce vague entries that lacked deeper thinking and demonstration of comprehension. Any student could demonstrate this lack of engagement, but the students most consistent in demonstrating these behaviors were the low and average achieving students.

When writing in a dialogue journal was first introduced, many students' letters consisted solely of within text thinking; however, as the students became more comfortable with the process of reading and writing in their journals, the retellings and summaries were accompanied by instances of beyond text thinking. The higher-achieving students were more likely to demonstrate beyond-text thinking with no prompting from the teacher's feedback, but all students no matter their achievement level were able to demonstrate beyond text thinking when responding to the written feedback from the teacher. Students reading nonfiction showed a greater tendency to solely retell or summarize in their letters, no matter their achievement level.

How does writing in a dialogue journal support writing for a specific audience?

When students wrote in their dialogue journals, they were writing for the specific audience of their teacher. Although these dialogue journals were an informal way of expressing their thoughts about their independent reading, the teacher had a very specific set of expectations that came in the form of the dialogue journal checklist (see Appendix D). The dialogue journal checklist was reviewed and attached to the inside cover of each student's journal when dialogue journals were

first launched. Based on this checklist, students learned the expectations held by their audience for their dialogue journal letters. Observations, dialogue journal entries, and interview answers have been analyzed for how students keep their audience in mind when writing in their dialogue journals.

Use of Dialogue Journal Checklist

During the dialogue journal center, students were observed for how they proceeded in writing a dialogue journal entry. When dialogue journals were first launched, I observed students making checks on their dialogue journal checklists as they wrote their letters. This behavior ceased once students were comfortable with the process of writing in their dialogue journals. The dialogue journal checklist was a valuable scaffold in the beginning of the process but became obsolete as the class delved further into the dialogue journal exchange. Anna, Cameron, Ethan, and Lena illustrate how the dialogue journal checklist was used early on to help students get their letters started. After the second observation, students very rarely returned to their checklists.

Anna wrote the date and greeting and checked those items off the list. When she finally began writing, she used the checklist as a guide.
(Use of checklist; Observation 1)

Anna returned and sat staring at the page and flipping between pages. When I came over to prompt her to write, she had the date and greeting.
(Use of checklist; Observation 2)

Cameron began using his dialogue journal checklist without any prompting. When I came over to check on him because he had missed the introduction day, he had already made a series of checks. When asked if he needed any help, he shook his head no and said "I get it."
(Use of checklist; Observation 2)

Ethan: "What could I write? Oh. Okay. The date." Ethan has a sarcastic nature, but he did demonstrate that he understood the use of the checklist.
(Use of checklist; Observation 1)

Ethan scanned over his journal and said, "Way more than 5 sentences," before he slammed his journal shut. His comment about the 5 sentences shows he was thinking about what is required by his audience.
(Use of checklist; Observation 2)

Lena glanced around to check on others. She then looked over her checklist and started writing.
(Use of checklist; Observation 1)

Although the students did not use the dialogue journal checklist after the initial weeks of dialogue journals being used, many of the students articulated the expectations for using the checklist in their interviews. Ethan and Gavin were more honest in their answers about decreasing their use of the checklist. Nora also touched on how she had internalized the steps in her head to use as she was writing her letter.

Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.
I used it in the beginning, but I don't really use it anymore.
(Use of checklist; Ethan Interview Question 5)

Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.
I don't really use it. It's important so I should use it.
(Use of checklist; Gavin Interview Question 5)

Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.
First I write the date. Then I write Dear Miss Armstrong. I kind of just go down the list.
(Use of checklist; Anna Interview Question 5)

Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.
At the end, when I am all done writing I go back to the checklist. If anything is missing, I try to add it. I also think about the steps while I am writing.
(Use of checklist; Nora Interview Question 5)

Each student's dialogue journal letter was analyzed using the checklist to see how they met the expectations of their audience. The following table takes certain items from the checklist and finds the percentage of how often each student met that item.

Table 4.1 Students' Use of the Dialogue Journal Checklist

Student	Anna	Cameron	Ethan	Gavin	Jane	Lena	Mason	Nora
Greeting	100%	75%	83%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Closing	0%	100%	50%	100%	100%	67%	33%	67%
What happened	83%	100%	83%	100%	100%	33%	56%	100%
What I think	33%	44%	83%	44%	91%	78%	100%	78%
Responded to teacher	40%	13%	100%	38%	63%	100%	100%	50%
Makes sense	100%	89%	100%	100%	100%	89%	100%	100%
5 Sentences	83%	33%	67%	78%	45%	13%	89%	78%

The first two items, the greeting and the closing, had to do with the expected structure of the dialogue journal entry. Students were very consistent in opening with a greeting (e.g. Dear Miss Armstrong), but were somewhat what less consistent with finishing with a closing (e.g. Sincerely, Name). This lack of a closing may have been due to time constraints in some cases as students had to move on to their next center.

The next two items, what happened and what I think, had to do with how the students demonstrated their comprehension. Most students were very consistent in summarizing or retelling what had happened in their book. Despite being an above-

average learner, Lena included what happened in her dialogue journal letters only 33 percent of the time. As her audience, this made it more difficult for me to keep up with what her book was about, and I had to go off of the opinions and ideas she presented as her own thoughts. Anna, Cameron, and Gavin were the least likely to write about what they thought of their book. As described earlier, Anna was very anxious about the writing process and her summaries represented a marked improvement in writing for an audience. Cameron and Gavin very often presented only the facts of their nonfiction texts rather than their thoughts. I will delve further into the fifth item in the following section, use of teacher feedback.

When writing for an audience, it is very important that the audience can easily make sense of what has been written. This was the case in nearly every journal entry from every student. Cameron once did not distinguish who “they” was in his text, and Lena had to stop mid-entry when she was called away to a meeting.

The last item, writing five sentences, was an attempt to make sure students spent enough time writing to truly express themselves. When I compared the student who most consistently wrote at least five sentences, Mason, with the student who most rarely wrote five sentences, Lena, I found a discrepancy between quality and quantity. Although Mason had met the requirement, his thoughts could be termed vague and lacking in substance while Lena’s shorter entries contained many of her own highly developed thoughts. The following two entries are a comparison of Mason and Lena’s typical work. Although Mason’s has five sentences, it lacks the thought expressed by Lena in her three sentences.

Illustration 4.36: Lena Dialogue Journal Letter 5

I would prefer nonfiction
because I really dislike
fiction. I don't know when
I am learning very
much from the soft
life that ~~not~~ a lot
of the atmosphere
is overdone - it is very
tummy - the bubbles
in soft drinks are
made of carbon dioxide.

Illustration 4.37: Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 6

The book in reading now is
Rome. The author is Jeff Smith.
I'm on part 82. It's really
good. I really want to read
more.

Use of Teacher Feedback

Along with being observed for how they used the dialogue journal checklist, students were also observed for how they used their teacher's feedback in writing their next letter. The most commonly observed behavior was the student reading or rereading their letter from the teacher before beginning to write their next letter. Unlike the checklists, the observed behavior of students using the teacher's feedback continued for the duration of the study. Students of all achievement levels spent time reading the feedback from the teacher.

Cameron glanced over the teacher's letter before beginning to write. He read my response before starting his own.
(Use of teacher feedback; Observation 6)

Ethan: "What if I want to write about a different book I'm reading now? Do I answer your questions about the old one first and then write about my new one?" Ethan was able to answer his own question about what to do when starting a new book. This tells me he understands what I am looking for in his dialogue journal letters (their thoughts about what they are currently reading).
(Use of teacher feedback; Observation 2)

Jane read comfortably for fifteen minutes. She flipped between pages of my response and her new letter. Jane continues to be very engaged with the process. She is likely using the teacher feedback in her next letter.
(Use of teacher feedback; Observation 7)

Lena: Down on one knee at her seat. Flipping between journal pages as she writes. Lena's flipping between two pages shows me she was using the feedback provided in the teacher response in her next letter.
(Use of teacher feedback; Observation 2)

Lena: "Is it alright if I answer your questions first?" Lena studied my letter carefully. When the timer went off to begin writing in their journals, Lena commented that she had only just begun to read again after answering my questions in her letter. The fact that she spent nearly fifteen minutes answering my questions shows that she is thinking more deeply when she answers. (Use of teacher feedback; Observation 4)

Lena read my letter before she started reading and again after she had read.
Lena is really thinking about how to respond to the questions I ask.
(Use of teacher feedback; Observation 5)

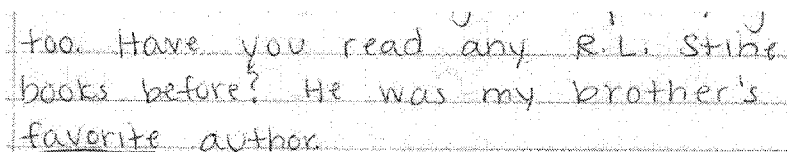
Mason visibly flipped between pages in his dialogue journal. Mason was likely reading and responding to the teacher feedback/questions.
(Use of teacher feedback; Observation 3)

Nora reread the teacher feedback and highlighted the two questions that had been asked in the teacher's letter.
(Use of teacher feedback; Observation 3)

Although students were observed reading the teacher's feedback, it did not necessarily mean they would respond to the teacher's prompts or questions in the following letter. In Observation 6, Cameron was seen perusing the teacher's letter, but he did not respond to the question asked of him by the teacher.

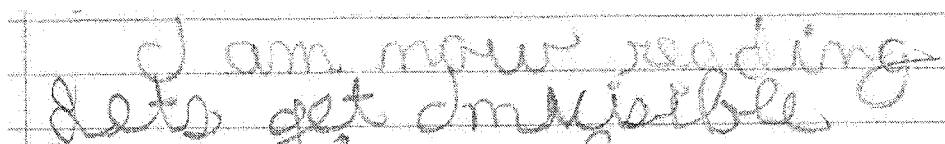
Cameron began a new book today. After reading for fifteen minutes, he very quickly looked over my letter before starting his own. Cameron has a habit of skipping over responding to my questions when he has started a new book.
(Use of teacher feedback; Observation 7)

Illustration 4.38: Cameron Teacher Response 5



too. Have you read any R.L. Stine books before? He was my brother's favorite author.

Illustration 4.39: Cameron Dialogue Journal Letter 7



I am now reading
lets get miserable

Students who changed their book often were less likely to consistently respond to the teacher's prompts or questions. The following table shows the

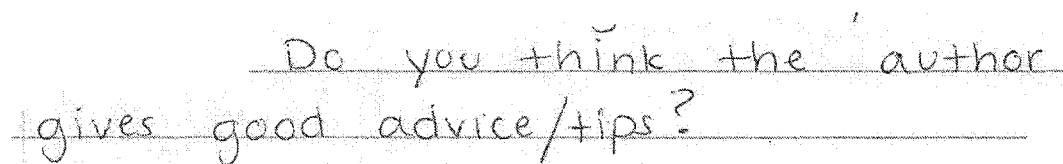
students' book choices and the amount of time they spent reading and writing about that book. The shaded areas are text titles that students spent three or more observations reading and writing about.

Table 4.2 Book Titles

Observation	Anna	Cameron	Ethan	Gavin	Jane	Lena	Mason	Nora
1	Judy Moody Saves the World! by Megan McDonald		The Battle Begins By Tony Abbott	How to Survive Almost Anything By Brooks Whitney	The Glass Castle By Jeannette Wells	Tattoo of Death By R.A. Montgomery	Ghost of Fear Street By R.L. Stine	Dolphin Tale By Gabrielle Reyes
2		Howday Inn By James Howe	The Edge Chronicles: Beyond the Deepwoods		The Witness By Robert Westall	Story of the Earth By Stuart Malin		The Girls Book: How to Be the Best Everything
3		N.F.L.'s Best Players	By Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell		Skylark By Patricia MacLachlan			By Juliana Foster
4		Jackie Robinson					How to Eat Fried Worms	Judy Moody Saves the World!
5		Sports Illustrated: Baseball's Stars		Frogs (Non-fiction)			By Thomas Rockwell	By Megan McDonald
6		Headless Ghost By R.L. Stine		Snakes Alive in X-Ray Vision	Sarah Plain and Tall By Patricia MacLachlan		Bone By Jeff Smith	War Horse By Michael Morpurgo
7		Let's Get Invisible						
8		James Howe book		Bee Workers	James and the Giant Peach		Diary of a Wimpy Kid	Judy Moody Predicts the Future
9		Snakes and Lizards		Inside the Slidy Diner				By Megan McDonald

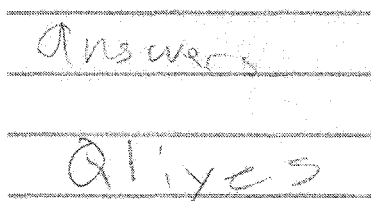
When Gavin was reading *How to Survive Anything* by Brooks Whitney for the first three observations, he was very consistent in responding to the teacher's prompts; however, once he began changing his book every one or two observation, he no longer responded to questions. Instead he would launch into an explanation of his new book.

Illustration 4.40: Gavin Teacher Response 3



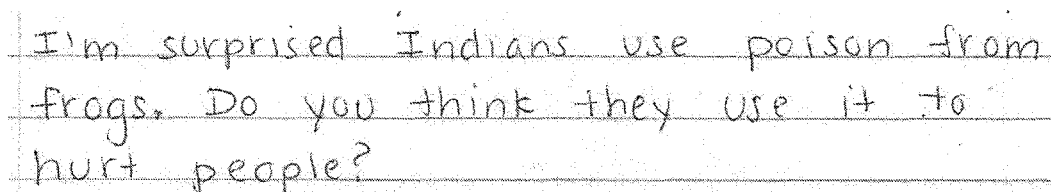
Do you think the author gives good advice/tips?

Illustration 4.41: Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 4



Answers
All yes

Illustration 4.42: Gavin Teacher Response 5



I'm surprised Indians use poison from frogs. Do you think they use it to hurt people?

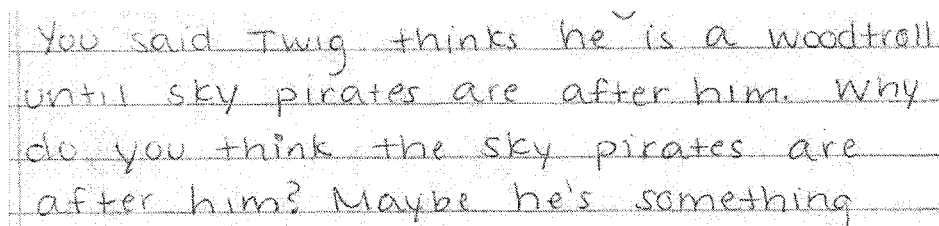
Illustration 4.43: Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 6



I'm reading Snakes Alive in my vision Scientist Kik

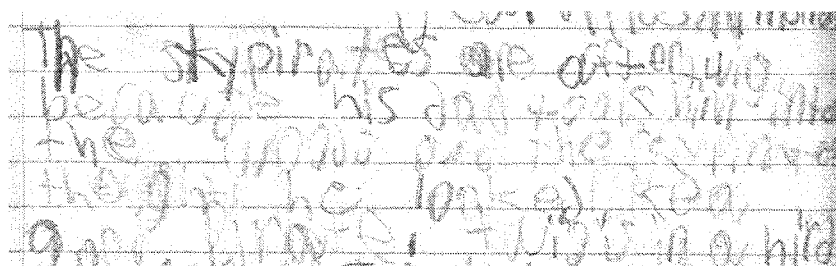
Students who read their books for an extended period of time were more likely to respond to teacher prompts. Both Ethan and Lena responded to the teacher's feedback 100 percent of the time. They were engaged and thinking about the same book for nearly the entire length of this study. Remaining actively engaged in their texts may have made their desire to discuss their book greater than those who did not spend much time with a text. The following excerpts from Ethan and Lena's dialogue journals reflect their typical responses to the teacher's feedback for the duration of the study.

Illustration 4.44: Ethan Teacher Response 2



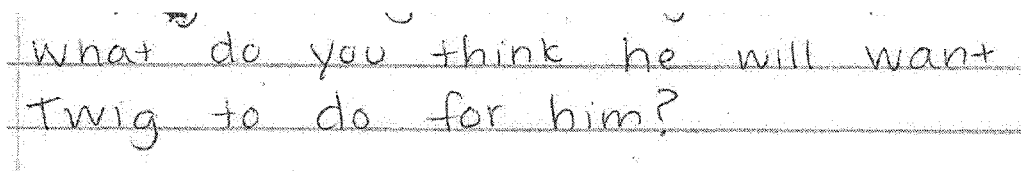
You said Twig thinks he is a woodtroll until sky pirates are after him. Why do you think the sky pirates are after him? Maybe he's something

Illustration 4.45: Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 3



The sky pirates are after him because his dad says that the pirates are the bad guys. The pirates are bad. Twig is a kid

Illustration 4.46: Ethan Teacher Response 5



what do you think he will want Twig to do for him?

Illustration 4.47: Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 6

Instead of the trial asking for
something he just discovered...

Illustration 4.48: Lena Teacher Response 2

Are there any similarities between
the big bang and creation?

Illustration 4.49: Lena Dialogue Journal Letter 3

I've never heard that
question before! Maybe there
are similarities, but I just
haven't looked them out...

Illustration 4.50: Lena Teacher Response 9

interesting. It's hard to believe the
earth is constantly shifting beneath
your feet! I can't wait to hear more
about your reading.

Illustration 4.51: Lena Dialogue Journal Letter 10

The earth moves
beneath our feet!
Cool, but you don't
hear any more on
the subject. I'm
wondering what
people...

When students were asked how they use the feedback from the teacher in their letters, the answer common among students was to answer the teacher's questions before moving on to write more about what was currently happening in their book. Nora noted that she reads the teacher's letters first in case she is asked to make a prediction. One of the most interesting responses came from Lena, who found that the feedback with the teacher helped to develop a positive rapport between the teacher and herself.

How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?

I usually see what questions you have in your letter and answer them. Then I write down what happens in my book.

(Use of teacher feedback; Anna Interview Question 4)

How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?

Mostly I use your feedback by answering back to your letter before I write any new stuff.

(Use of teacher feedback; Cameron Interview Question 4)

How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?

I usually write the answers to your questions first. Sometimes you write, "What do you think will happen?" so I have to make sure I answer that before I start reading my book.

(Use of teacher feedback; Nora Interview Question 4)

How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?

The checklist says to respond to the teacher, so I usually answer your questions. The subject that I was writing about a lot is one that people aren't really on the same page as me. It was nice to read what you wrote because I like knowing that there's a person who is on the same page. It makes me feel like I am not the only one.

(Use of teacher feedback; Lena Interview Question 4)

Common Patterns Across Focal Children for Writing for a Specific Audience

When dialogue journals were first launched, I observed students of all achievement levels making checks on their dialogue journal checklists as they wrote their letters. This behavior ceased once students were comfortable with the process of writing in their dialogue journals.

The most commonly observed behavior was the student reading or rereading their letter from the teacher before beginning to write their next letter. Unlike the checklists, the observed behavior of students using the teacher's feedback continued for the duration of the study. Students of all achievement levels spent time reading the feedback from the teacher. Students who changed their book often were less likely to consistently respond to the teacher's prompts or questions. Students who read their books for an extended period of time were more likely to respond to teacher prompts.

How does writing in a dialogue journal support critical appreciation of book and reading attitude?

Students' critical appreciation of reading was analyzed through students' observed interactions with their reading choices, the about text thinking demonstrated in their journals, and their interview responses related to critical appreciation of reading.

Observed Comments and Behaviors

The comments students made during the dialogue journal center were analyzed for how they demonstrated a critical appreciation of reading. Analysis

showed all students indicated a positive attitude toward dialogue journals and an appreciation for the texts they had chosen to read. There were also some unfavorable opinions of text indicated, which is also a part of thinking critically about reading.

Students who demonstrated a positive attitude toward writing in the dialogue journal indicated a willingness to stay on task, an acceptance of the dialogue journal expectations, and a desire to communicate with their audience. In the very first observation, Gavin resisted attempts by a classmate to distract him and worked hard on his first letter. In the fourth observation, Gavin's question about when I would next be visiting the classroom indicated that he had a desire to continue communicating through his dialogue journal.

Gavin was one of the first to begin writing in his journal. His neighbor, a low-achieving girl, tried to take his book but he grabbed it back and continued writing without saying anything to her. Gavin showed his excitement about writing a letter again when he grabbed back his book to make sure he stayed on task. He would not allow any distractions from the task at hand.
(Attitude toward writing in a dialogue journal; Observation 1)

Toward the end of my time in the classroom, Gavin asked when I would be returning. This tells me he enjoys the process.
(Attitude toward writing in a dialogue journal; Observation 4)

When the expectations for dialogue journals were first explained, the class as a whole was taken through the steps on the dialogue journal checklist. During her perusal of the list, Jane's acceptance of the dialogue journal expectations was noted through her comment about how reasonable the checklist seemed.

During reading/taping of checklists:

Jane: "This seems reasonable."

Jane looked over the checklist and thought that the expectations for the dialogue journals sounded reasonable.

(Attitude toward writing in a dialogue journal; Observation 1)

In the third observation, Lena enthusiastically requested that I read her journal letter before leaving the classroom. This request indicated a desire to communicate with her audience through the dialogue journal.

Lena came over to show me that she had written "Christ" in capital letters for to highlight the word three times. She begged me to read her letter before I left. Lena is very passionate about her reading choice, and she is excited to have someone read her writing.

(Attitude toward writing in a dialogue journal; Observation 3)

The comments and behaviors of students during the dialogue journal center demonstrated the support of dialogue journals in encouraging an appreciation for reading. Critical appreciation was demonstrated through comments related to the desire to continue reading, the choice to read during personal time, and the excitement about progressing through a text. When Ethan was asked to begin his journal letter in Observation 3, he indicated a desire to continue reading. Lena also indicated a desire to continue reading in Observation 4.

Ethan complained that he only had 2 pages left in his chapter before getting to work on his journal letter. Ethan is an active reader, so I was not surprised by his unwillingness to pause and write in his journal.

(Appreciation of reading, desire to continue reading; Observation 3)

When the timer went off to begin writing in their journals, Lena commented that she had only just begun to read again after answering my questions in her letter. I told her to read until she felt comfortable finishing her letter. Lena is a very thorough reader and puts a great deal of thought into her writing.

(Appreciation of reading, desire to continue reading; Observation 4)

Two students chose to use their personal time at home to continue reading the books they had selected to discuss through dialogue journals. Ethan spends much of his time reading at home, and Nora was very excited to read books on her new Kindle.

Ethan: "I left my book at home, but I read a lot of it. Can I write about all of the stuff I remember?"

His willingness to read at home shows how much he enjoys it.

(Appreciation of reading, personal time; Observation 4)

Nora: "I got a kindle for Christmas, and the book I am reading is on it. Is it okay if I just start my letter?"

Teacher: "Do you feel like you can remember your book enough to write about it?"

Nora: "Yes." Nora wrote steadily for about fifteen minutes. I could see her neat, precise cursive. Nora values reading outside of school. She was very excited to get a kindle for Christmas.

(Appreciation of reading, personal time; Observation 4)

A number of comments related to the critical appreciation of reading had to do with how the student was progressing along in their text. The designated time for dialogue journals helped students to stick with a book. Students of all achievement levels were able to experience the joy of progressing through and finishing a good book. Anna had been very quiet about the dialogue journal process in the beginning, but in Observation 6, she shared her joy with me in the progress she had made in her book.

Anna: "I'm almost done."

Me: "Wow. You are getting close!"

Anna: I think I know who is going to win the contest.

Me: Who do you predict?

Anna: I think Judy is going to win.

Me: Oh, man! I still hope Stink wins.

Anna is very excited to be so far along in her chapter book. Her showing me the progress she has made tells me she is gaining confidence as a reader.

(Appreciation of reading, progress made; Observation 6)

In my first observation, Mason very strongly stated that he did not like reading; however, by Observation 5, he was proudly telling me about finishing my book recommendation, *How to Eat Fried Worms*.

Mason: "I haaaaatttee reading." Mason and another male student were the biggest naysayers while the rest of the class was interested in reading and writing in a dialogue journal.

(Unfavorable opinion of reading; Observation 1)

Mason: "Here, Miss Armstrong. I already finished it."

Me: "You did?"

Mason: "Seriously. It was really good."

Me: "Wow, Mason! That's great. Did you like it?"

Mason: "Yeah, it was really, really good."

Me: "I can't wait to hear more about what you thought of it in your writing."

(Appreciation of reading, progress made; Observation 5)

In Observation 2, Nora was already proud of the progress she had made in her book.

In Observation 5, Jane could hardly contain her excitement about finishing *Skylark*.

Nora: "I finished my letter. I'm already on chapter 2."

Nora was proud of what she had accomplished so far in her text and in her dialogue journal.

(Appreciation of reading, progress made; Observation 2)

Jane showed me she was in the final pages of *Skylark*. She also whispered excitedly to me that Sarah is going to have a baby!

(Appreciation of reading, progress made; Observation 5)

The students would oftentimes speak to me about their favorable, or in Cameron's case, unfavorable opinions of their books. This practice of letting me know what they thought about their book became more common once we had built a positive rapport with one another. The first instance of expressing a favorable opinion of a text came during Observation 3 from Jane.

Jane called me over to show me her new chapter book by Patricia MacLachlan. We shared a brief conversation about how we loved *Sarah Plain and Tall*. (Favorable opinion of text; Observation 3)

When I noticed Gavin had been reading the same book since launching dialogue journals in Observation 4, I commented on the fact. Gavin then stated his opinion of the book as a reason for sticking with it.

Teacher: "I see you are reading the same book as last week."

Gavin: "Yeah, I like it a lot."

Teacher: "Make sure you tell me what you like about it in your next letter."
(Favorable opinion of text; Observation 4)

Sometimes students wanted to show me specific parts of their books that they liked.

In Observation 6, Jane demonstrated an appreciation for the humor and language used in the book. In Observation 7, Mason demonstrated an appreciation for the illustration in the graphic novel he was reading.

Jane: "Miss Armstrong. Look at this song that Caleb made up." *Sings the song and laughs*

Me: That Caleb is a funny kid, isn't he?

Jane: Oh, yeah.

(Favorable opinion of text; Observation 6)

Mason: "I'm reading a new book!"

He shows me the illustrations and points out a rat.

Mason: "Check out this rat man and look at how fat this one is."

Me: "Do you like those illustrations?"

Mason: "Oh, yeah. They're cool."

(Favorable opinion of text; Observation 6)

Until my eighth observation, no student had expressed an unfavorable opinion of their book. When Cameron told me he stopped reading his book because it was boring, I realized that we had built enough rapport for him to feel comfortable in acknowledging that dislike to me.

Cameron: "I didn't like my book so I stopped reading it."

Me: "That's ok, Cameron. Make sure you write about why you didn't like it."
(Unfavorable opinion of text; Observation 8)

When interviewed, each student was asked to describe their feelings, or attitude, about reading and writing in a dialogue journal. Lena and Anna both described the excitement they feel about writing while Gavin cleverly described the process as similar to talking on the phone. Some students, like Cameron and Ethan, liked being able to write about their own book choice. Ethan also noted that he still does not like writing.

How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?

I'm so excited when I get to write that I kind of rush. Sometimes I might wake up and start my day feeling blue, but then you show up and it cheers me right up because I know I will get to write. When I was in third grade, I hated recess. But then I started bringing my notebook with me, and it made it so much better because I could write and write and write.

(Attitude toward writing in a dialogue journal; Lena Interview Question 7)

How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?

I get excited because when I get an idea I can write it down for you to read.

(Attitude toward writing in a dialogue journal; Anna Interview Question 7)

How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?

It's kind of fun. It's like talking on the phone but with reading and writing.

(Attitude toward writing in a dialogue journal; Gavin Interview Question 7)

How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?

I think it is pretty fun because I get to write about what I pick out to read. I get to choose what I write about.

(Attitude toward writing in a dialogue journal; Cameron Interview Question 7)

How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?

Sometimes it's boring and sometimes it's fun. *Why is it boring sometimes?*

Well, I only said that because I don't like to write. *Why is it fun sometimes?* I get to write about MY book.

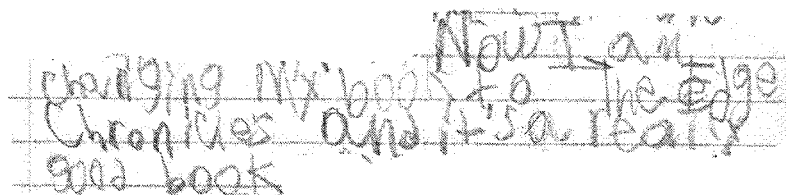
(Attitude toward writing in a dialogue journal; Ethan Interview Question 7)

About Text Thinking

Each student's dialogue journal was highlighted and coded for instances of about text thinking. In their dialogue journals, each student was able to demonstrate a critical appreciation for reading. This about text thinking included offering a critique, or opinion, of the book, appreciating the language of the text, or judging the author's credibility.


On their own, the students most often offered a critique, or opinion, of their independent reading choice. These opinions were often very vague and did not delve into a reason for producing such an opinion. The critique usually had to do with how the students were feeling about their book in general. The following excerpts from the letters of Ethan, Jane, Mason, and Nora are typical examples of how students would demonstrate an opinion of their book overall.

Illustration 4.52: Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 2



Now I am
changing my book to The Edge
Chronicles and it's a really
good book

Illustration 4.53: Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 4



It's starting to get really
really really good

Illustration 4.54: Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 1

I
love the book because it's
very interesting and I never
get bored with the book.

Illustration 4.55: Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 8

So far I love
the book it's exciting.

Illustration 4.56: Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 11

I love
James and the Giant
peach so far. It's adventurous

Illustration 4.57: Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 1

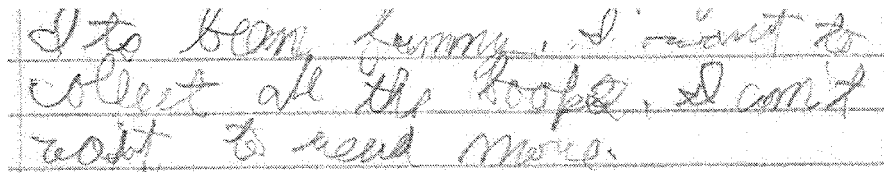
The thing I really
like is the end because I left
off with a snake on the boy's
leg.

This book make me excited.

Illustration 4.58: Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 7

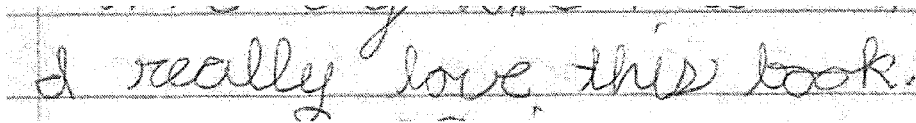
I finished the book it was
really good. I want more
bone books.

Illustration 4.59: Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 9



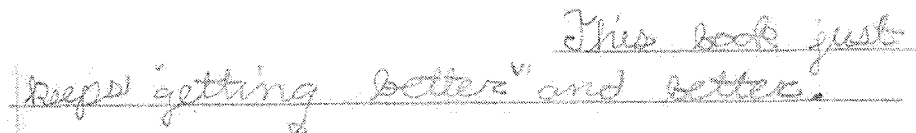
I to beem funny. I want to collect all the books. I can't wait to read more.

Illustration 4.60: Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 6



I really love this book.

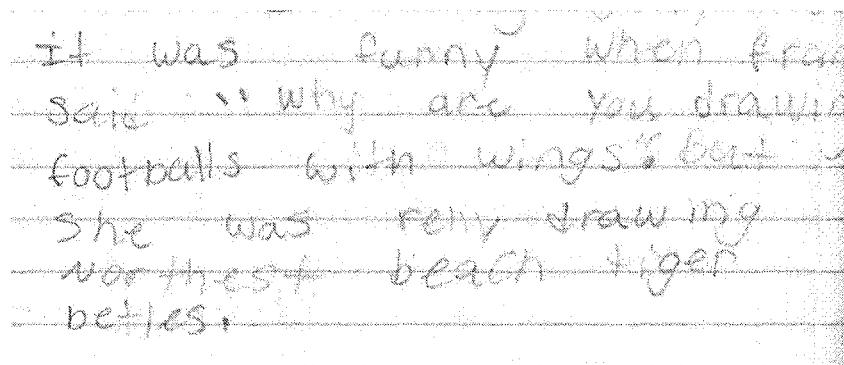
Illustration 4.61: Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 7



This book just keeps getting better and better.

Although critiques were the most prevalent form of about text thinking, there were also times when the students would appreciate the language used in the text. In the following three excerpts demonstrating an appreciation for the language being used, this appreciation corresponded with what the student found funny or humorous. In her fourth dialogue journal letter, Anna copied a quotation directly stated by a character that she thought was a funny thing to say.

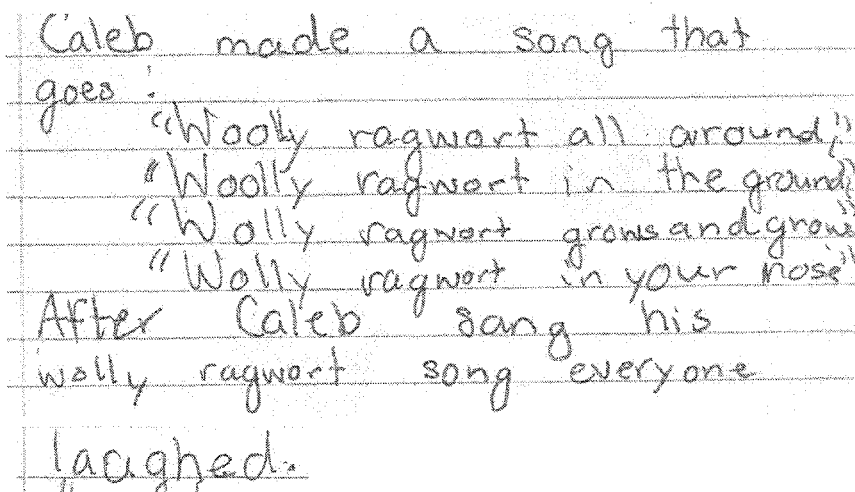
Illustration 4.62: Anna Dialogue Journal Letter 4



it was funny when Frank said "why are you drawing footballs with wings" but she was really drawing north east beach tiger beetles.

Jane also copied a direct quotation from her book into her eighth dialogue journal letter. She thought that the song that Caleb, a character in her story, had made up was very funny.

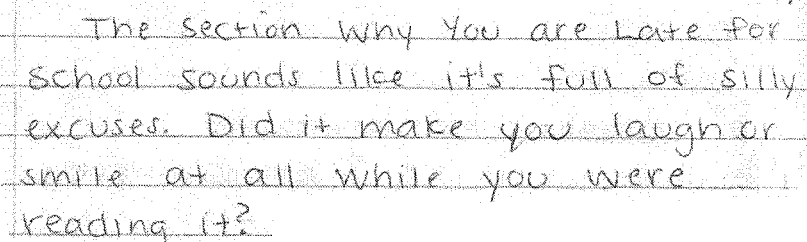
Illustration 4.63: Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 8



Caleb made a song that goes:
"Woolly ragwort all around,"
"Woolly ragwort in the ground,"
"Wolly ragwort grows and grows"
"Wolly ragwort in your nose"
After Caleb sang his woolly ragwort song everyone laughed.

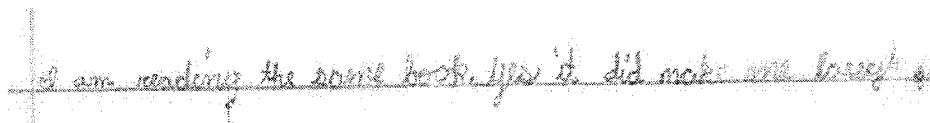
In her third dialogue journal letter, Nora responded yes to a prompt about whether the silly tips in her book had made her laugh.

Illustration 4.64: Nora Teacher Response 2



The section why you are late for school sounds like it's full of silly excuses. Did it make you laugh or smile at all while you were reading it?

Illustration 4.65: Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 3



I am reading the same book. Yes it did make me laugh.

Through scaffolding from the teacher feedback, two students who very rarely demonstrated deeper thinking were able to engage in about text thinking. Gavin and Nora were able to judge the author's credibility. In their third dialogue journal letters, Gavin trusted the author's intentions implicitly while Nora noted that she was not really sure if the author had the authority to dole out tips.

Illustration 4.66: Gavin Teacher Response 2

Do you think the author is being silly or do you think he really wants you to use these tips?

Illustration 4.67: Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 3

Answers from your note: 1st you think he/she wants us to do it.

Illustration 4.68: Nora Teacher Response 2

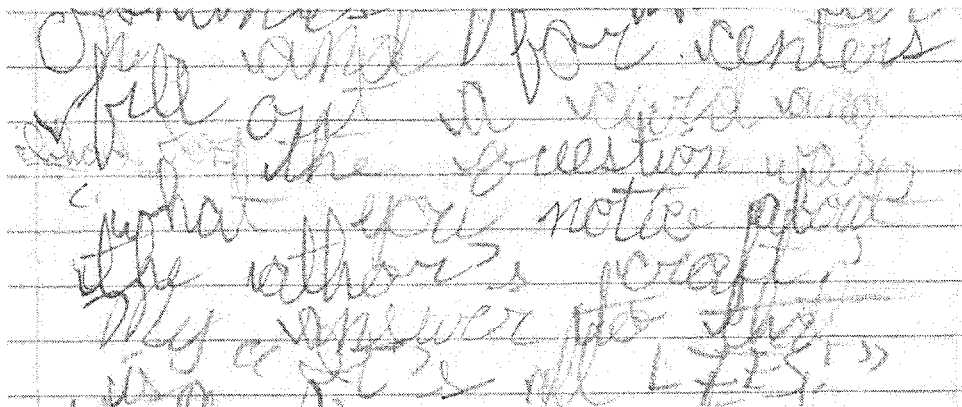
Do you think the author knows what it means to be the best everything?

Illustration 4.69: Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 3

not know if the author knows what it means to be the best everything.

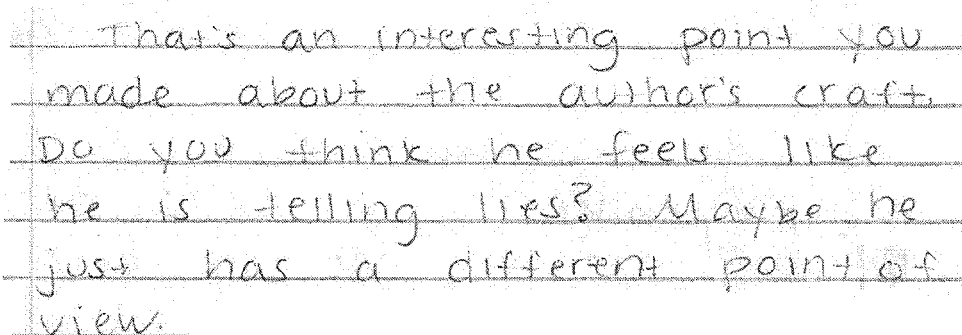
Lena demonstrated deeper thinking often in her letters, but she also benefited from the exchange with the teacher when it came to judging the author's credibility. Lena felt very strongly about her religious beliefs and was angered that the author did not acknowledge religion in his explanation of how the earth was created. Through our exchange, she took a step back and realized that her differing point of view did not mean the author was a liar.

Illustration 4.70: Lena Dialogue Journal Letter 8



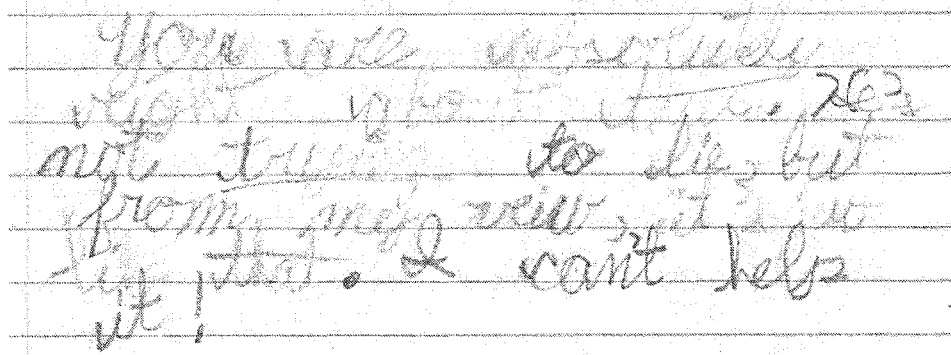
Open and I for centers
I fill off a circle
the question was
what you notice about
the author's craft?
My answer to this
is "It's all LIES."

Illustration 4.71: Lena Teacher Response 8



That's an interesting point you
made about the author's craft.
Do you think he feels like
he is telling lies? Maybe he
just has a different point of
view.

Illustration 4.72: Lena Dialogue Journal Letter 9



You will subscribe
right who it is. Let's
not trust to lie, but
from my view, it's no
big deal. I can't help
it!

Common Patterns Across Focal Children for Critical Appreciation of Book and Reading Attitude

Analysis showed all students indicated a positive attitude toward dialogue journals and an appreciation for the texts they had chosen to read. All students, no matter their achievement level, who demonstrated a positive attitude toward writing in the dialogue journal indicated a willingness to stay on task, an acceptance of the dialogue journal expectations, and a desire to communicate with their audience. Critical appreciation was demonstrated through comments related to the desire to continue reading, the choice to read during personal time, and the excitement about progressing through a text by both average and higher achieving students.

Students of all achievement levels demonstrated about text thinking in their dialogue journal entries. This about text thinking included offering a critique, or opinion, of the book, appreciating the language of the text, or judging the author's credibility.

Summary

Students who were engaged in both their reading and writing were more likely to have produced dialogue journal letters that demonstrated comprehension. These students were more likely to be the higher-achieving students like Jane and Ethan. Students who were engaged in neither their reading nor writing, reading but not writing, or writing but not reading were more likely to produce vague entries that lacked deeper thinking and demonstration of comprehension. Any student could demonstrate this lack of engagement, but the students most consistent in demonstrating these behaviors were the low and average achieving students.

When writing in a dialogue journal was first introduced, many students' letters consisted solely of within text thinking; however, as the students became more comfortable with the process of reading and writing in their journals, the retellings and summaries were accompanied by instances of beyond text thinking. The higher-achieving students were more likely to demonstrate beyond-text thinking with no prompting from the teacher's feedback, but all students no matter their achievement level were able to demonstrate beyond text thinking when responding to the written feedback from the teacher. Students reading nonfiction showed a greater tendency to solely retell or summarize in their letters, no matter their achievement level.

When dialogue journals were first launched, I observed students of all achievement levels making checks on their dialogue journal checklists as they wrote their letters. This behavior ceased once students were comfortable with the process of writing in their dialogue journals.

The most commonly observed behavior was the student reading or rereading their letter from the teacher before beginning to write their next letter. Unlike the checklists, the observed behavior of students using the teacher's feedback continued for the duration of the study. Students of all achievement levels spent time reading the feedback from the teacher. Students who changed their book often were less likely to consistently respond to the teacher's prompts or questions while students who read their books for an extended period of time were more likely to respond to teacher prompts.

Analysis showed all students indicated a positive attitude toward dialogue journals and an appreciation for the texts they had chosen to read. All students, no matter their achievement level, who demonstrated a positive attitude toward writing in the dialogue journal indicated a willingness to stay on task, an acceptance of the dialogue journal expectations, and a desire to communicate with their audience. Critical appreciation was demonstrated through comments related to the desire to continue reading, the choice to read during personal time, and the excitement about progressing through a text by both average and higher achieving students.

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CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

This study was conducted to explore how one class of fourth grade students' learning was supported through using dialogue journals to discuss independent reading. The students read from their independent reading choices and responded in their dialogue journals twice per week for five weeks. In the fifth week, eight focal children were interviewed about using dialogue journals. The researcher analyzed the data from observation field notes, students' dialogue journal writing samples, the teacher's journal feedback, and the students' interviews.

The researcher found evidence of reading and writing engagement to be a precursor to demonstrating comprehension (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009). Students demonstrated their comprehension through within, beyond, and about text thinking (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009). Within text thinking included summarizing and retelling, and the researcher found that students reading nonfiction were more likely to engage in this literal recall. Students demonstrating beyond text thinking made connections, predicted, questioned, and inferred in their dialogue journal entries. Several students incorporated about text thinking into their dialogue journal letters by critiquing the book or appreciating the language used by the author. The teacher feedback tailored to students' instructional levels helped to drive all students to deeper level thinking (Werderich, 2002).

The researcher found evidence of students' thinking processes as they wrote for a specific audience. Students initially used the dialogue journal checklist as a guideline for structuring their responses, but this behavior became less observed as they internalized the expectations. Students read and responded to the feedback of the teacher by answering any questions posed by the teacher in her letter. This use of teacher feedback was more consistently demonstrated by students who read their book for an extended period of time (Hancock, 1993). In the interviews, many students revealed how they kept their audience in mind by trying to pick out the most interesting, or "juiciest," details in the book to share.

Students' critical appreciation of books was demonstrated through their written and spoken critiques of their independent reading choices. Many students demonstrated a positive reading attitude as well as a positive attitude toward writing in their dialogue journals. Students were excited to read the teacher's response and keep the exchange going.

Conclusions

The analysis of observations, interviews, and students' dialogue journal writing samples and the teacher's written feedback resulted in several conclusions about the fourth grade students in this study.

Writing in a dialogue journal about independent reading held students accountable for engaging in and thinking about their texts. A major concern prior to this study was how to hold students accountable for their independent reading, and

dialogue journals were successful in addressing this issue. Students like Anna who demonstrated avoidance behaviors early on in the process soon learned that they must actually pay attention to their reading in order to successfully write a dialogue journal letter. Engaged, effective reading was a precursor to thoughtful writing (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009).

Students were able to demonstrate their comprehension in their dialogue journals. By analyzing and coding the focal children's dialogue journal entries, students demonstrated summarizing, retelling, making connections, predicting, questioning, inferring, critiquing, and appreciating author's language. Students incorporated within, beyond, and about text thinking within their writing (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).

The teacher was able to individualize her instruction according to her students' needs within their dialogue journals. If a student was relying solely on summarizing or literal recall, the teacher was able to question or prompt the student to engage in deeper thinking like making a connection. The dialogue journal became a forum for personalized instruction (Werderich, 2002).

Students demonstrated deeper understanding of fiction as opposed to nonfiction. Students require more explicit instruction in responding to factual text and would benefit from practice in questioning and making inferences from informational text. Students took on an efferent, or cognitive, purpose in responding to nonfiction texts, while a deeper transaction with the text would have been maintained by blending both efferent and aesthetic responses (Rosenblatt, 1995).

Instructional Implications and Recommendations

The research in this study offers several implications and recommendations for fourth grade teachers interested in using dialogue journals to support independent reading.

The students in this study did not receive any explicit instruction in the type of reading strategies the researcher was looking for. Teachers wishing to use dialogue journals to support independent reading should make explicit the connection between the comprehension strategies modeled and used during guided practice and the desire to see these strategies used and applied with dialogue journals (Fisher & Frey, 2008).

When writing questions for students in their dialogue journals, the researcher recommends building off of each student's individual response. Questions that came from the natural give and take between teacher and student made the dialogue journal feel more like a written conversation than a list of comprehension questions (Fuhler, 1994). Be careful to not include too many questions as this may overwhelm the student. Although it is unlikely teachers will have read all of the books students choose for independent reading, the teacher should familiarize herself with the content of the books to be better equipped to respond to students' dialogue journal entries.

Dialogue journals should be read and responded to on a regular basis. Students were excited and motivated to read and exchange letters. Too long of a lapse of time between responses may take away from this motivation. Students may also have forgotten their line of thought if a lengthy amount of time has passed, and this

will detract from their understanding. Extending students' written responses to higher levels of thinking requires consistent teacher feedback, or support coming from the teacher through prompts, questions, or reinforcement (Hancock, 1993).

A varied selection of books with different genres and levels available is recommended. Students need motivation in selecting and sticking with an appropriately-leveled text for an extended period of time. This is important because students who read the same book for a longer period of time were more likely to demonstrate deeper comprehension. When students continually write in the process of reading a text for an extended period of time, they reach higher levels of understanding (Hancock, 1993).

Limitations

A limitation to this study is the small number of participants. As a result, there is not a large degree of generalizability to other studies that a larger population would have afforded. Another limitation to this study is the length; five weeks was not a long time for the researcher to observe the growth in students' responses in their dialogue journals over time. A year-long study would have been more appropriate.

Suggestions for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to explore how writing in a dialogue journal about independent reading impacted students' learning as it related to comprehension, writing for a specific audience, and critical appreciation of books and reading attitude.

While the research did expose information about this purpose and its components, further research could provide more information.

This study could be conducted again with different grade levels or classrooms. An interesting possibility to follow would be observing how fourth grade students in an inclusion classroom respond to the dialogue journal process. Dialogue journals could also be used with the primary grade levels, as suggested by Ethan in his interview. Analysis of dialogue journals from a larger number of students could yield more information about the benefits of individualizing instruction.

This study could be conducted over the course of a year. The data could be collected and analyzed to answer how students advance to higher levels of thinking over time. A study of multiple years may indicate if students continued to demonstrate comprehension strategies as they moved up in grade levels.

Another avenue further research could take would be to incorporate technology into the dialogue journaling process. Composition notebooks could be replaced with email or a classroom blog. Technology could be a motivating factor for students who do not like to write.

Final Thoughts

As this study suggests, using dialogue journals as a support for independent reading has the potential to address students' literacy needs through individualized instruction. Dialogue journals provide students with an authentic purpose for writing and a specific audience to write for. Students consistently engage in reading and then

expressing their comprehension in writing. Their learning is personalized to their needs as the teacher carefully chooses what questions to ask and how to prompt for deeper understanding (Werderich, 2002). In today's classroom, there is a need for evidence-based practices that stretch students' thinking and comprehension, and dialogue journals are one such promising teaching practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Observation Field Notes

Date: _____

Grade Level: _____

Observations	Interpretations

Appendix B

Student Interview Questions

Participant:

Date:

1. How does writing in a dialogue journal help you understand your book?
2. How do you decide what to write about in your dialogue journal?
3. How has writing in your dialogue journal affected your thinking as you read your book?
4. How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?
5. Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.
6. Does writing in your dialogue journal help you with the other types of writing you do in school? Why do you think so?
7. How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?
8. How do express whether you like or dislike a book in your dialogue journal?

Connect with the Book

- What is your reaction to the character or characters?
- How does the book remind you of your life?
- How does the book remind you of other books?
- Is this book similar or different to other books by the same author?
- At first I thought the book was about _____ but now I think it is about _____.
- What will you remember most about the book?
- Is there anything you find confusing or have questions about?

Analyze and Critique the Book

- What do you like or dislike about the book?
- Find places where the author gave good description.
- Why do you think the author wrote the book?
- What did you find interesting or surprising?
- How does the author make you feel?
- What do you notice about the illustrations?



Appendix D

Dialogue Journal Checklist

- ☐ I wrote the date.
- ☐ I have a greeting and a closing.
- ☐ I included the title, author, and how far along I am in the book I'm reading.
- ☐ I wrote about what happened AND what I think.
- ☐ I responded to what my teacher wrote to me.
- ☐ I reread my letter to make sure it makes sense.
- ☐ I have written at least five sentences.

Appendix E: Observation Field Notes

Observation 1

Date: January 23, 2012

Grade Level: 4th

Observations	Interpretations
<p>Whole Group Lecture: The researcher introduced her thesis project and reviewed what the content of the dialogue journals would be using sample letters. Each student received a bookmark listing questions to jumpstart their thinking. Students taped the dialogue journal checklist to the inside cover of their composition notebook.</p> <p>During introduction of content:</p> <p>-Lena: "Can I read books that I've written?"</p> <p>-Nora: "We [the class] should start doing it for "Fun Friday."</p> <p>-Male student: "I haaatttee writing."</p> <p>-Mason: "I haaaaatttee reading."</p> <p>-Ethan: "We are going to need a long time. I'm reading a 17 book series."</p> <p>During passing out of bookmarks:</p> <p>-Gavin: "Can I read this book?" Researcher responded yes and he smiled as he tucked his new bookmark inside.</p> <p>During reading/taping of checklists:</p> <p>-Jane: "This seems reasonable."</p> <p>-Anna was very quiet during this time as she looked through her new materials.</p> <p>Independent Practice:</p> <p>Students were asked to select a chapter book to read for fifteen minutes. At the end of the fifteen minutes, the students were asked to write their first letter to Miss Armstrong about what happened in their book and what they think.</p> <p>During book selection/reading:</p> <p>-Lena pulled a book out of her pouch (bag on the back of each student's chair) immediately. Settled right into book with it closely pushed up to her face.</p> <p>-Anna was the last student to select a book and spent most of the fifteen minutes for reading looking around the classroom library.</p> <p>-One female student was pointing out a part in her Judy Blume book to the girl next to her and smiling.</p>	<p>The students were very responsive to the dialogue journal introduction. Many of the questions were in regards to how often I would collect and respond to their letters. There were some mixed emotions about reading/writing. Mason and another male student were the biggest naysayers while the rest of the class was interested. Lena's questions about reading books she has written shows her enthusiasm as a writer (she writes her own newspaper). Gavin was quietly excited about the idea and waited to personally ask me about his book choice. Anna lacks confidence in reading/writing and is shy speaking in front of a group so she had no questions.</p> <p>Anna exhibited several avoidance behaviors. She would select a book, take a step towards her seat,</p>

<p>-Ethan pulled book out of his pouch and had his head on his elbow, grasping book in one hand.</p> <p>During journal writing:</p> <p>-Gavin was one of the first to begin writing in his journal. His neighbor, a low-achieving girl, tried to take his book but he grabbed it back and continued writing without saying anything to her.</p> <p>-Anna continued reading before being given a reminder to start writing. She opened her journal then got out her chapstick. She received another reminder. She wrote the date and greeting and checked those items off the list.</p> <p>-Lena glanced around to check on others. She then looked over her checklist and started writing.</p> <p>-Ethan: "What could I write? Oh. Okay. The date."</p>	<p>then turn around, and put it back. This process went on nearly the entire fifteen minutes. Ethan and Lena were very engaged in their reading. Gavin showed his excitement about writing a letter again when he grabbed back his book to make sure he stayed on task. He would not allow any distractions from the task at hand. Lena was interested in seeing what others were up to before she began writing. She is a high achiever and cares a lot about doing what is expected. Ethan has a sarcastic nature, but he did demonstrate that he understood the use of the checklist.</p>
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Observation 2

Date: January 25, 2012

Grade Level: 4th

Observations	Interpretations
<p>Whole Group: I explained to students that the first thing I wanted them to do was read my letter responding to their first letter. If I asked them a question, I reminded them to answer it in their next letter. "Just like last time, I want you to read your book for the next fifteen minutes. Then I am going to give you time to write a letter explaining what happened AND what you think."</p> <p>Ethan: "What if I want to write about a different book I'm reading now? Do I answer your questions about the old one first and then write about my new one?"</p> <p>Me: "Yes! That's exactly what I'd like anyone who has changed books to do. Answer my questions first. Then tell me about your new book."</p> <p>During independent reading:</p> <p>Mason immediately pulled out his R.L Stine book from the previous week.</p> <p>Anna pulled the book she started last week out of her pouch and immediately began reading.</p> <p>Lena took a new book from her pouch, tucked her seat in tightly to her table, and sat upright.</p> <p>Jane informed me she was changing from <i>Glass Castle</i> to her Christmas book from home. It is an anthology of Christmas stories and songs.</p> <p>Ethan immediately began his letter because he had read several chapters of his book at home.</p> <p>Nora checked the clock several times. In a whisper, she said "Kay. It's almost time to stop reading..." as she closed her book.</p> <p>Gavin sat quietly with his head on his arm reading. He began writing early.</p>	<p>Ethan was able to answer his own question about what to do when starting a new book. This tells me he understands what I am looking for in his dialogue journal letters (their thoughts about what they are currently reading).</p> <p>Mason showed an engagement with reading his R.L. Stine book.</p> <p>Anna had much more time to read when she already had a book picked out.</p> <p>Lena continues to act like an engaged reader.</p> <p>Jane was very excited about her new Christmas anthology and was engaged in reading.</p> <p>Nora seems to be more interested in writing the letter than reading; however, she must engage in her reading to have an appropriate topic to write about.</p> <p>Cameron demonstrated a lot of confidence in his own abilities to read and write.</p> <p>Jane demonstrated that she was thinking about her reading. She made a</p>

<p>Cameron was very focused on his book.</p> <p>During writing of dialogue journal letter: Cameron began using his dialogue journal checklist without any prompting. When I came over to check on him because he had missed the introduction day, he had already made a series of checks. When asked if he needed any help, he shook his head no and said "I get it."</p> <p>Jane was writing and reading at the same time. She called me over to show me that she had first thought the story was about Jesus, then thought it was actually about kittens being born, then confirmed that she was right the first time.</p> <p>Ethan: Scanned over his journal, said "way more than 5 sentences," and slammed his journal shut.</p> <p>Nora: "I finished my letter. I'm already on chapter 2."</p> <p>Mason finished his journal entry early.</p> <p>Anna asked to use the bathroom before starting to write. She returned and sat staring at the page and flipping between pages. When I came over to prompt her to write, she had the date and greeting. I asked her what her book was about, and she gave me a verbal explanation about the contest Judy Moody and her brother are in. I asked her if she could write about that contest in her journal, and she nodded yes.</p> <p>Lena: Down on one knee at her seat. Flipping between journal pages as she writes.</p>	<p>prediction, rejected it, and then confirmed it again!</p> <p>Despite his sarcasm, Ethan seems to want to do the right thing. His comment about the 5 sentences shows he was thinking about what is required by his audience.</p> <p>Mason continued to be engaged with the process during writing.</p> <p>Anna avoided the writing task at first. She gets anxious about some schoolwork; however, when I passed by her towards the end of the time allotted for writing, she had written several sentences showing me that she retell what she had read about.</p> <p>Lena's flipping between two pages shows me she was using the feedback provided in the teacher response in her next letter.</p>
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Observation 3

Date: January 30, 2012

Grade Level: 4th

Observations	Interpretations
<p>Whole Group: Mrs. Vendetti asked students to teach her about their journal process.</p> <p>Mason: "What we write in our journals is kind of like our four square summary sheets. We tell her what we like and don't like too."</p> <p>Ethan: "We start it 'Dear Miss Armstrong' because it's a letter to her."</p> <p>Nora: "We can use this purple sheet that she taped to our journals to check off what to write."</p> <p>Lena: "Sometimes she might ask someone a question in her letter and we have to answer it in our next letter."</p> <p>I complimented the group on their explanation and reminded them along with telling me what happens I wanted to know what they think. I also prompted them to look again at their bookmarks. The prompts on the bookmarks would give them ideas of what to write about while the checklist would help them edit.</p> <p>During independent reading:</p> <p>Ethan showed me the book he had brought from home that he is still reading. He read steadily and quietly for fifteen minutes.</p> <p>Mason continued reading his R.L. Stine book.</p> <p>Anna continued reading her Judy Moody book.</p> <p>Towards the end of the fifteen minutes for reading, she was chatting and laughing with the girls at her table.</p> <p>Nora read steadily for the fifteen minutes.</p> <p>Lena pulled out the same book and after a brief perusal of it, immediately began writing a letter in her journal.</p> <p>Gavin read quietly for fifteen minutes.</p>	<p>Mason, Ethan, Nora, and Lena were able to partially verbalize how to use a dialogue journal. Other students also contributed to the conversation talking about how they discuss books of their own choice.</p> <p>Mason was engaged in his reading.</p> <p>Anna exhibited a few avoidance behaviors during the reading portion; however during writing she was focused and productive. Her teacher was very excited about the success she showed during test-taking writing today. Perhaps she feels that her writing is valued and that makes her more excited to do it.</p> <p>Lena is very caught up in the Big Bang Theory vs. creation debate, and is standing firmly behind her beliefs. She definitely has a point of view. That may be the newswoman coming out in her.</p> <p>Gavin continues to be a very</p>

<p>Cameron read steadily for fifteen minutes.</p> <p>Jane called me over to show me her new chapter book by Patricia Mac Laughlin. We shared a brief conversation about how we loved Sarah Plain and Tall.</p> <p>During writing:</p> <p>Anna wrote consistently for the entire designated fifteen minutes. She flipped back between the pages in her book and journal.</p> <p>Nora reread the teacher feedback and highlighted the two questions that had been asked in the teacher's letter.</p> <p>Cameron used the checklist as he wrote his letter.</p> <p>Gavin finished his letter early.</p> <p>Mason visibly flipped between pages in his dialogue journal.</p> <p>Ethan complained that he only had 2 pages left in his chapter before getting to work on his journal letter.</p> <p>Lena came over to show me that she had written "Christ" in capital letters for to highlight the word three times. She begged me to read her letter before I left.</p> <p>Jane scanned her bookmark briefly before beginning to write her letter.</p> <p>In a brief conversation with Mrs. Vendetti, she mentioned that Anna had successfully finished the writing portion on her social studies test today. Anna typically does not finish in the designated time frame, but today she was only a few minutes behind the other students.</p>	<p>steady, quiet worker. Toward the end of my time in the classroom, he asked when I would be returning. This tells me he enjoys the process.</p> <p>Nora also continues to be engaged in the process. She reads and writes very dutifully, and she was the first to use a highlighter.</p> <p>Mason was likely reading and responding to the teacher feedback/questions.</p> <p>Ethan is an active reader, so I was not surprised by his unwillingness to pause and write in his journal. I am hoping he will come to enjoy the writing as much as the reading.</p> <p>Jane is a very astute girl. By scanning her bookmark, I could tell she had taken my advice to use it as a prompt to heart.</p>
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Observation 4

Date: February 1, 2012

Grade Level: 4th

Observations	Interpretations
<p>Whole Group: The class was asked to read for fifteen minutes until the timer went off then to begin writing in their journals.</p> <p>Lena: "Is it alright if I answer your questions first?" "Yes." Lena studied my letter carefully.</p> <p>When the timer went off to begin writing in their journals, Lena commented that she had only just begun to read again after answering my questions in her letter. I told her to read until she felt comfortable finishing her letter.</p> <p>Nora: "I got a kindle for Christmas, and the book I am reading is on it. Is it okay if I just start my letter?" Teacher: "Do you feel like you can remember your book enough to write about it?" Nora: "Yes." Nora wrote steadily for about fifteen minutes. I could see her neat, precise cursive.</p> <p>Jane: "Can I read and write at the same time?" Teacher: "You can try it that way today. Stop to record your thoughts about something you read before you start reading again." Each time Jane paused to write, she used a different color pen to record her thoughts.</p> <p>Anna was absent, but the following is a brief conversation with her teacher. Me: I see Anna is not here today, but I wanted to let you know there's been such an improvement in her letters. The first time we tried the dialogue journals she was stuck and only wrote the title and author, but now she is writing entire pages about her reading. Teacher: That is really interesting. I'm wondering if</p>	<p>Lena is very passionate about the big bang vs. creation debate, and her eagerness to answer my questions shows she enjoys discussing it. She must think deeper about her beliefs so that she can expand on them in her letter. The fact that she spent nearly fifteen minutes answering my questions shows that she is thinking more deeply when she answers.</p> <p>Nora is very steady in her use of dialogue journals. She is very careful in her writing.</p> <p>Jane takes an interesting approach to writing in her dialogue journal. We are constantly constructing meaning as we read, so I am allowing her to test out her technique of reading and writing at the same time.</p> <p>Anna's progress with the dialogue journals is very interesting. This is a girl who is anxious about any writing task, but she has embraced the dialogue journals.</p>

<p>the positive feedback makes her feel less anxious about writing.</p> <p>Me: Even after her first letter, I told her what a great start that was and how I couldn't wait to hear more of her thoughts.</p> <p>Teacher: Maybe she sees that you read and can understand what she is trying to convey.</p> <p>Ethan: "I left my book at home, but I read a lot of it. Can I write about all of the stuff I remember?"</p> <p>Teacher: "Sure."</p> <p>Ethan got right to work on his letter, and he spent nearly fifteen minutes writing it.</p> <p>Mason: Wandered up to the classroom library after reading the newest response in his journal.</p> <p>Me: "Did you get a chance to read my recommendation?"</p> <p>Mason: "Yeah. I think I've seen that TV show."</p> <p>Me: "Does it sound like a book you'd be interested in trying?"</p> <p>Mason: "Yeah. Do you have it right now?"</p> <p>Me: "Yes, I do."</p> <p>Mason took Fried Green Worms back to his seat and began reading.</p> <p>Cameron: Pulled out the football book he had been reading from last observation. Cameron looked over the teacher response and then flipped between pages as he started his letter.</p> <p>Teacher: "I see you are reading the same book as last week."</p> <p>Gavin: "Yeah, I like it a lot."</p> <p>Teacher: "Make sure you tell me what you like about it in your next letter."</p>	<p>Ethan is very serious when it comes to his fantasy series. His willingness to read at home shows how much he enjoys it.</p> <p>Mason's willingness to try out my recommendation shows that he trusts my opinion. The dialogue journals have helped us to build a rapport with each other and share an appreciation of books.</p> <p>Cameron was visibly using my feedback in beginning his next journal entry.</p> <p>My brief interaction with Gavin shows that he likes his book and is continuing to stick with it.</p>
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Observation 5

Date: February 6, 2012

Grade Level: 4th

Observations	Interpretations
<p>Whole Group: The class was asked to read for fifteen minutes until the timer went off then to begin writing in their journals.</p> <p>Mason: "Here, Miss Armstrong. I already finished it."</p> <p>Me: "You did?"</p> <p>Mason: "Seriously. It was really good."</p> <p>Me: "Wow, Mason! That's great. Did you like it?"</p> <p>Mason: "Yeah, it was really, really good."</p> <p>Me: "I can't wait to hear more about what you thought of it in your writing."</p> <p>Mason immediately began writing his letter about How to Eat Fried Worms after returning his book and was done quickly.</p> <p>Ethan: "I forgot to bring in my book again. I always forget when you're coming. Can I write about what I have read at home?"</p> <p>Me: "Yes, Ethan. Go ahead and start."</p> <p>Cameron started the timer for fifteen minutes then picked out a sports magazine from the classroom library. He perused the issue leisurely.</p> <p>Cameron began the timer to write. He looked back and forth from magazine to journal as he was writing.</p> <p>Gavin chose a new book today. He spent a couple minutes browsing the library before returning to his seat with a nonfiction book about frogs. He carefully studied the pictures. He looked back and forth from book to journal as he was writing.</p>	<p>Mason certainly enjoyed and appreciated my book recommendation. R.L. Stine took him a couple weeks to finish, but How to Eat Fried Worms was completed in less than a week! He is showing a great attitude toward reading, but I think he could spend a little more time on his writing.</p> <p>Ethan continues to read for pleasure at home and shares his thoughts in writing during the journals time.</p> <p>Cameron showed interesting behaviors while reading the sports magazine. In this less serious type of reading, he took a less serious approach to reading as he scanned what interested him. His looking back and forth tells me he needed help remembering what he had read.</p> <p>Gavin's perusal of the pictures tells me that he was appreciating the photography used in the text. When he looks back and forth between book and journal, it warns me that he</p>

Lena: "Miss Armstrong! I am going to keep reading this book because I am not yet finished with it. We need to find more books like it."

While reading: "Come look at this. Carbon dioxide in the air is the same kind of gas they use to make soft drinks. It's like I'm breathing out Dr. Pepper every time I exhale."

Lena read my letter before she started reading and again after she had read.

Lena: "I guess I'm kind of weird because I don't like fiction. I don't know why I don't like it."

Me: "That's not weird. Everyone has their own taste in books. My cousin only likes to read true murder stories. How's that for weird?"

Lena: "Eww. I do want to read more books about this topic. Not the big bang, the other part."

Me: "You mean creation?"

Lena: "I mean God."

Me: "Okay. Do you like stories from the bible?"

Lena: "Yes!!!"

Me: "We will have to see what we can find. Make sure you are looking for books from home too in case we can't find ones you are interested in here."

Anna's bookmark shows she is about halfway through her Judy Moody book. She read quietly before beginning her letter.

I noticed she was using bubble letters in her letter so I paused her to tell her not to take up all her time doing bubble letters. She shook her head no and pointed to an illustration in the book that she was replicating. I could then see that the rest of her letter was written in normal handwriting, so I let her continue her efforts.

Jane showed me she was in the final pages of Skylark. She also whispered excitedly to me that

is continuing to copy word for word what he has read rather than writing what he thinks.

Lena is very engaged with her reading choice. Her joke about Dr. Pepper tells me she is making connections between what she reads and what she knows, and she is also enjoying her book.

I found our conversation to be very informative in her attitude toward reading. Lena likes to learn new things and make sense of the world around her, which is why she is drawn to nonfiction.

Anna continues to make progress in her book, and she is showing more creativity as a writer. In an effort to help explain the book to her audience, she added an illustration that she found appealing.

Jane continues to have a great attitude toward the dialogue

<p>Sarah is going to have a baby! I told her I would have to bring Sarah Plain and Tall in for her to borrow as soon as possible.</p> <p>Jane showed me that she had written two letters since my last response, and she was working on her third today. She continued to use her different colored pens.</p> <p>Nora told me that she had finished her book on her Kindle and was going to start a new one at home. Since she hadn't started the new one yet, I asked her to read something during class that she could write about in her letter before she switched to the Kindle book.</p> <p>During writing, Nora constructed her letter very carefully in her neat cursive.</p>	<p>journaling process. She connected with the family in Skylark and shared in the joy of the characters when she found out Sarah was with child. She reads and writes additional letters on her own time, which tells me she is enjoying Skylark.</p> <p>Nora continues to be engaged in the dialogue journaling process.</p>
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Observation 6

Date: February 8, 2012

Grade Level: 4th

Observations	Interpretations
<p>Whole Group: The class was asked to read for fifteen minutes until the timer went off then to begin writing in their journals.</p> <p>Lena: "Miss Armstrong, come here! Narnia is a thumbs up. I have a pop-up book that summarizes the series, and I love those stories."</p> <p>Lena continued reading her book about the earth before writing. She had to stop abruptly when she was called to character club.</p> <p>Anna: "I'm almost done."</p> <p>Me: "Wow. You are getting close!"</p> <p>Anna: I think I know who is going to win the contest.</p> <p>Me: Who do you predict?</p> <p>Anna: I think Judy is going to win.</p> <p>Me: Oh, man! I still hope Stink wins.</p> <p>Jane: "Miss Armstrong. Look at this song that Caleb made up." *Sings the song and laughs*</p> <p>Me: That Caleb is a funny kid, isn't he?</p> <p>Jane: Oh, yeah.</p> <p>Mason: "I'm reading a new book!"</p> <p>*Shows me the illustrations and points out a rat*</p> <p>Mason: "Check out this rat man and look at how fat this one is."</p> <p>Me: "Do you like those illustrations?"</p> <p>Mason: "Oh, yeah. They're cool."</p> <p>Ethan: "I remembered my book today!" Holds it up high in the air.</p>	<p>Lena was off to a great start before she was interrupted by being called from the room for a meeting. When she called me over, she showed her approval of my book recommendation and noted how much she loved the Narnia pop-book she owns.</p> <p>Anna is very excited to be so far along in her chapter book. Her showing me the progress she has made tells me she is gaining confidence as a reader. She demonstrated some beyond text thinking in our conversation.</p> <p>Jane is appreciating the humor of the song and connecting with the characters.</p> <p>Mason was appreciating the illustrations included in this graphic novel. It definitely looks like the creepy stuff he is interested in.</p> <p>Ethan is very comfortable as a reader. He becomes absorbed in what he is reading. He needed to be prompted to begin</p>

<p>Ethan read in his usual slouched over state. He kept reading until students were asked to find a stopping point and start their letter.</p> <p>Me: Gavin, do you have a book picked out? *Looks at neighbor. She passes him a snake book.* Gavin: Yup. Gavin was done writing very quickly.</p> <p>Nora is continuing to read a book on her Kindle so she spent time the time writing her letter based on her memory.</p> <p>Cameron was absorbed in his book until the students were asked to begin writing. He glanced over the teacher's letter before beginning to write.</p>	<p>his letter.</p> <p>Gavin was not very engaged in the process today. Last entry he questioned why he would have to respond to my feedback and avoided answering any questions. The quickness with which he finished today tells me not much deeper thinking was occurring.</p> <p>Nora continues to read for pleasure at home. She was done quickly with her letter, so I am thinking that her letters are less detailed when she has not just been immersed in the book and is instead writing from memory.</p> <p>While other students began writing on their own, Cameron needed to be prompted to begin writing. Reads my response before writing his own.</p>
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Observation 7

Date: February 13, 2012

Grade Level: 4th

Observations	Interpretations
<p>Whole Group: The class was asked to read for fifteen minutes until the timer went off then to begin writing in their journals.</p> <p>Lena immediately opened her journal and looked over my response. She reread her last letter, and then turned the page to finish her thought. When she was done writing her letter, she began reading her Story of the Earth book.</p> <p>Anna scanned over my response and then began reading her Judy Moody book for fifteen minutes. Anna began writing immediately sometimes looking back at her book.</p> <p>Cameron began a new book today. After reading for fifteen minutes, he very quickly looked over my letter before starting his own.</p> <p>Nora began writing her letter immediately. She looked over my response carefully and began writing. She is still reading War Horse on her Kindle at home.</p> <p>Jane read comfortably for fifteen minutes. She flipped between pages of my response and her new letter.</p> <p>Ethan was absent.</p> <p>Gavin continues reading the magazine featuring about snakes. When it came time to write, I could see him forming a Venn diagram on his paper. He</p>	<p>Lena's entry focuses on what she had read in the previous observation and finishing her thought. She did not add anything about what she had read today.</p> <p>Anna is very engaged in the reading and writing process. When she looks from journal to book, it tells me she is focusing on writing what happened in the story.</p> <p>Cameron has a habit of skipping over responding to my questions when he has started a new book.</p> <p>Nora continues to read for pleasure at home. Her careful study of my letter tells me she was hopefully answering my questions when she began my letter.</p> <p>Jane continues to be very engaged with the process. She is likely using the teacher feedback in her next letter.</p> <p>Gavin noted the compare/contrast structure of</p>

<p>looked carefully through his text as he added facts to the different areas.</p>	<p>the text lent itself to creating a Venn diagram in his journal.</p>
<p>Mason finished his Bones book today. He continues to be enthusiastic about the graphic novel and commented that Mrs. Vendetti needed to add some more of these books to her library.</p>	<p>Mason continues to be a very engaged reader although his writing meets the bare minimum.</p>

Observation 8

Date: February 15, 2012

Grade Level: 4th

Observations	Interpretations
<p>Ethan had to make up tests he had missed due to his illness. Anna was absent.</p> <p>Lena is very close to finishing her book, and she showed me that she was on the last two pages of facts. She looked over my letter and began writing.</p> <p>Mason needed a reminder to write in his journal. He was very reluctant to begin an entry finished quickly.</p> <p>Gavin spent time organizing information into chart form. He looked often from his text to his journal as he wrote.</p> <p>After reading and writing, Cameron asked if it would be okay to choose a new book because he found his current choice to be boring. I told him that his book choice is completely up to him, and he can decide when to give a book up. He spent some time in the classroom library and showed me a James Howe book that he had found. He was excited to find this book because this is an author he has read before.</p> <p>Nora started writing her letter immediately.</p> <p>Jane showed me that she was putting Sarah Plain and Tall on hold while she tries out James and the Giant Peach.</p>	<p>Lena's perusal of my letter tells me she was responding to the teacher feedback in her next letter.</p> <p>Mason continues to be an avid reader and a reluctant writer.</p> <p>Gavin's looking between text and journal tells me he is using literal information.</p> <p>Cameron's willingness to express a negative opinion about a book tells me that a rapport has been built. He felt comfortable telling me he was not into his book.</p> <p>Nora's immediate writing may mean that her letter his vague.</p> <p>Jane continues to be enthusiastic about the dialogue journal process.</p>

Observation 9

Date: February 27, 2012

Grade Level: 4th

Observations	Interpretations
<p>Ethan and Anna were not present in the room.</p> <p>Lena finished her book today. She quoted a line from the Chronicles of Narnia before she began to read.</p> <p>Mason spent very little time writing in his dialogue journal before returning to his new book, The Diary of a Wimpy Kid.</p> <p>Gavin chose to read a picture book today. He looked back and forth from text to journal as he wrote.</p> <p>Cameron chose a new nonfiction book today about reptiles. He looked often between book and journal as he wrote.</p> <p>Nora started writing her letter immediately.</p> <p>Jane is enjoying her new book, James and the Giant Peach. She spent time writing and then drew a sketch illustrating one of her favorite scenes that she had read about.</p>	<p>Lena's is a very thorough reader and read her nonfiction text from cover to cover. She is looking forward to reading Narnia and has prepared by rereading her pop-up book and watching the movie.</p> <p>Mason continues to be an avid reader and a reluctant writer.</p> <p>Gavin's looking between text and journal tells me he is using literal information. The picture book he chose today is a piece of fiction and is an opportunity for him to move away from the literal recall that characterized his responses to nonfiction.</p> <p>Cameron's is not spending an extended period of time on the books he chooses. I'm thinking he needs something hockey related to hold his interest.</p> <p>Nora's immediate writing may mean that her letter his vague.</p> <p>Jane continues to be enthusiastic about the dialogue journal process. Her incorporation of a sketch tells me she is visualizing what she reads.</p>

Appendix F: Anna's Dialogue Journal Entries

Anna Dialogue Journal Letter 1

Anna Teacher Response 1

Dear Miss Armstrong,

The title of my book is 'Judy Moody saves the world!'. The author that wrote my book is Megan McDonald.

Dear ,

Hopefully next time you will have more time to write! This is a great start. You used a greeting, the date, and told me the title and author. I've heard Judy Moody books are really funny. Maybe next letter you can tell me if you think so too. I'm very excited to see your thoughts about your book.


Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Anna Dialogue Journal Letter 2

title: Judy Moody Saves the
World

Dear, miss Armstrong

Judy Moody wants to go in
a crazy strips contest, and
the Grand Prize is roller skates
plus your design printed on a
crazy strip for one year.

Judy Moody's little brother
is drawing a blue bat
because people don't like
bats, but bats eat millions
of insects so people should
like bats. Judy Moody is
drawing a smiley face in
yellow, red, blue, green, and
purple. On the next chapter
Judy woke up early the
next morning. She found
her flashlight and a
notepad, and she tiptoed
down stairs to the kitchen
and started to save
the world. She, Judy Moody,
was in a Mr. Rubbish mood.
Mr. Rubbish was a Good 

Anna Teacher Response 2

Dear _____,

That sounds like a pretty cool contest. What is a crazy strip used for? I like both of their design ideas, but I like Judy Moody's little brother's idea a little bit better because he has such an interesting reason for ~~doing~~ drawing a blue bat. Which crazy strip drawing do you like better?

I loved your letter and can't wait to hear more about your book!

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Anna Dialogue Journal Letter 3

Dear, mis Armstrong

The crazy strip contest is ^{piece}
for drawing something on a
piece of paper and the
Guges have to decide witch
one is the best. I think that
Judy Moody's little brother's
drawing is better because
in the story it said that
4 people were drawing smily
faces but no one was
drawing a bat. I in the
story judy tries saving the
world by R.E.C.Y.C.L.E.I.N.G.
Judy's science teacher is picking
papers. Every paper has a
animal on it, judy was the
only one how raised her
hand to go first, but Mr. Rupp
did not pick her he picked
Rocky. Rocky got a monkey.
Judy finily got pick she
was the last one, and there
was one more ticket and
she got a

Anna Teacher Response 3

Dear ,

I can't wait to hear who won the contest. I'm hoping Judy's little brother and his one-of-a-kind bat drawing win! I can't believe that even though Judy was the first one to raise her hand, she was the last one who got to pick an animal. She must feel mad. How would you feel if that happened to you? Did she get to pick an animal she liked still?

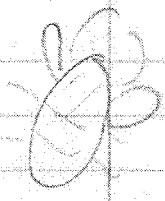
Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Anna Dialogue Journal Letter 4

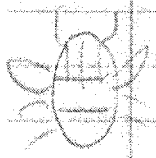
Dear Mrs. Armstrong

I am not sure
who will win the
contest just yet
but Judy did not
get a good animal
Judy got a
rather big beach
tiger. Judy
has been trying to
look out for one
her neighbor - friend
found a picture of
one on the
ground when they
were looking for
one they did
not find one then
they Judy was looking
for a stamp that
had a picture of one
and they did Judy found
out that was it too →

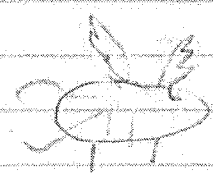
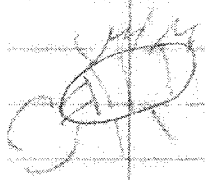


beaches live along
Sandy beaches. Judy
and Franck - her friend
decided to draw a
poster that said

Save the North
West
Beach Tiger
Beetle



By Judy
it was funny when Franck
said "why are you drawing
footballs with wings?" But
she was really drawing
northwest beach tiger
beetles.



Anna Teacher Response 4

Dear ,

Poor, Judy! She may not like the animal she got stuck with, but she seems to be working hard to learn about it anyway! Did Judy get mad when Frank said her beetles looked like footballs with wings? I hope she thought it was funny too. Let me know when you find out who wins that contest!

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Dear Miss Armstrong

Stink got a pet toad
and named it toady
Judy, Franck, and Rocky
were going to let it
go because Judy wanted
to save the world Stink
got mad when he found
out stink thought that
it was his fault because
he put toady in a tent
he made but he knew
that it couldn't be
his fault. So Stink told
Judy's and Stink's mom
and Dad. Dad said "I
can't get in trouble
by saving the world."

So Judy tried living in
a tree but Stink saw her
up in the tree and said
Hey. No fair! Mom and
Dad told you to go
to your room →

Anna Teacher Response 5

Dear

I know Judy was trying to save the world, but I think she should have asked Stink first before setting Toady free. Do you think she should get in trouble? I don't think she'll be able to live in that tree for long!

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Anna Dialogue Journal Letter 6

Dear Miss Armstrong,

Stink waved an envelope
in the air and he yelled
"Hey you, up there, and
Judy said "what now?
Judy got a letter
from the crazy stip
contest! When Judy, Stink,
and Rocky got off the
bus the next day, Stink
tried to get Judy out
of the tree. Stink said
"Race you to the mail
box, But it didn't work.
Then, Stink yelled "the
crazy stip contest Judy won
then Judy ran to the
mail box and ripped the
envelope open and Judy
said "Stink you lied.
but it really said
Go to Stink Win on the
envelope all Judy won
was a certificate.

Appendix G: Cameron's Dialogue Journal Entries
Cameron Dialogue Journal Letter 1

Dear Miss Armstrong,

In my book The Herald
I am Chester the cat who was
and Harold thought he was
murdered and so wrote 3 books.
Then Chester came
back and now a weeper class
are missing. Can they save the
Chester have gathered a play
team and the son of a son
can the team find the
Q. Q. Q. The Q. Q. Q. is the
153. I am on page
153. I am on page 153.

Sincerely,

Cameron Teacher Response 1

Dear _____,

Wow! Sounds like you're getting close to finishing! I liked how you were asking yourself those questions. Do you think the team will find the two dogs? Make a prediction and see if you're right! I'm wondering why all these animals are going missing... what do you think? Keep reading!

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Cameron Dialogue Journal Letter 2

and finished the
book. The owner of the
place offered them that,
they escaped and he
got caught.

Cameron Teacher Response 2

I have just read about N.F. 12's best players. Here are their names and years in football are Tony Roma 7 years, Matt Schaub 6 years, Chris Johnson 2 years, Pop Johnson 5 years, Tony Longabo 2 years, Steve Smith 3 years and Dwight Freeman 8 years.

Dear _____

I've heard about several of those NFL players. Did the author describe any of their accomplishments? I'm wondering which one you think is the best NFL player. I'm glad the animals were able to escape okay in your last book.

Sincerely,

Dear Miss Armstrong

I read about
- Jackie Robinson he
was born on
January 31, 1919, in Cairo
Georgia they all moved
to Jackie's uncles house
he led in stolen
bases and best all around
he won a world series
and in 1949 he won
the ~~mvp~~ mvp.

sincerely

Cameron Teacher Response 3

Dear

You wrote a lot of great facts about Jackie Robinson. Now I want to hear more about what you think. He won a lot of awards/honors.

Why do you think he was so successful? What made him different from all the other players? He must have worked very hard and been very talented to achieve all that he did.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Dear Mrs. Armstrong

I read about baseball
stars here's some facts.
Ken Griffey Jr. born
on 11/21/69 born in
Monroa, Pennsylvania.

Juan Rodriguez born
in Puerto Rico born
on 11/30/71

Alex Rodriguez July 27/78
New York, New York

Sincerely

Cameron Teacher Response 4

Dear _____,

I think it's interesting that Alex Rodriguez is from New York City because he plays for the New York Yankees. He still gets to live and play baseball where he grew up. I saw you reading the Sports Illustrated, and I want to hear more about what you think instead of just facts. Next time tell me what you think is interesting.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Dear Mrs. Armstrong

I read the Headless
Ghost by R. D. Oline
the Eda met a kid
named Seth. I think
he is a ghost. They
heard laughings
parties and talking.
I think it was a lot
of ghosts. What do
you think?

Sincerely

Cameron Teacher Response 5

Dear

The author R.L. Stine is known for being super creepy so I bet your prediction is right. I think there are a lot of ghosts partying too. Have you read any R.L. Stine books before? He was my brother's favorite author.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Cameron Dialogue Journal Letter 7
Cameron Teacher Response 6

Dear Mrs. Armstrong

I am now reading
lets get invisible
Max is a boy my
age he has a Birthday
party and they go to the
battlement find a door to
a extra room with a
mirror and it's a
magic mirror

Sincerely,

Dear

That magic mirror sounds interesting.
Do you think it will make him
invisible? That would be pretty
cool. I'd love to be invisible for
a day!

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Cameron Dialogue Journal Letter 8
Cameron Teacher Response 7

I found when they
~~found~~ the macie m...
with a friend. He has
crazy hair and the
kids name is Jack
last. I left off was
when they ran up
the stairs. He went
invisible. I stopped
reading that book
I thought it was
boring.

Sincerely

Dear

Since you are the reader, it's
your choice whether to finish a book.
Hopefully you will like the one you
picked out now better. You've read
books by this author before so I
think you will. Why do you like James
Hawes books?

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Cameron Dialogue Journal Letter 9
Cameron Teacher Response 8

Dear Mrs. Armstrong

Today I read about
lizards and snakes.
~~lizards~~ and snakes
are both reptiles,
cold blooded. lizards
~~are~~ have four
legs, run fast, and
have good eyesight
and snakes have
no legs, eat meat, bite or
squeeze prey, slither
and no eyelids.

Sincerely

Dear

Those are some interesting facts about
snakes and lizards. Did you know that
snakes didn't have eyelids? I wonder
how they blink...

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Appendix H: Ethan's Dialogue Journal Entries

Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 1

Ethan Teacher Response 1

Dear Miss Armstrong the battle
begins between
I am on chapter four of the
book. I think it has a Greek
mythological creatures. I think it has a
three-headed dog. I have never read the book.
Please respond to my questions.

Dear

I have not read this book, but I took Latin as my foreign language in high school so I know about Greek mythological creatures. What did the three kids get attacked by? Did they survive? I bet that three-headed dog was Cerberus. He guards the entrance to the Underworld. Let me know what you think!

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 2

The three kids got attacked
by a fire breathing wolf and they
they survived. Now I am
changing my book to The Edge
Chronicles and it's a really
good book and I am reading the
first book of the series called
beyond the edge of the world. It's a
book about the kid who
who is a wolf. He thinks
until I explain are after
him so he has to go
with a friend. But when he
leaves he has to go through
a dangerous forest. I will tell
you some of the animals and
what they can do.

Ethan Teacher Response 2

Dear

This does sound like a good book. You said Twig thinks he is a woodtroll until sky pirates are after him. Why do you think the sky pirates are after him? Maybe he's something more important than a woodtroll... I can't wait to hear about this dangerous forest. I bet Twig will run into more trouble than just those sky pirates. What do you think?

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 3

Dear Miss Armstrong
The sky pirates are attacking
because his dad told him that
the pirates are the sky pirates
though he looked like
a pirate, I didn't know
any other different
bird. The bird was called
a fox. He was about 40
Swamp. That's all I got
to say.

Ethan Teacher Response 3

Dear

Yikes! It sounds like Twig is just going to run into more and more trouble. I kind of feel bad for Twig because it seems like a case of mistaken identity. Do you think Twig is really a good pirate? Maybe he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 4

Ethan Teacher Response 4

I agree Twig was in the
wrong place at the wrong time
and it tells you about him being
a pirate in the end of the
book, and he's had to survive
a bunch of different tribes of
people and trolls and animals.
It's starting to get really
really really good. Some weird
troll just saved him from
drowning in mud. I wonder
what's going to happen
next, from

Dear

I wonder what is going to
happen next too! Twig's life and
fight for survival is filled with
action. Why do you think the
troll who saved him is weird?
Why does it take so long to
know Twig is a pirate?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 5

Ethan Teacher Response 5

Dear Miss Armstrong

I take so long to find out twigs a pirate because it takes a long time to find twig. I think the troll that saved twig is weird because if you were an evil troll and out of bones, would you save a stranger? I think the troll wants twig to do something for him how about you from

Dear

You're right. That troll is weird... or maybe he isn't so evil after all. He probably does want Twig to do something for him. There's a saying "No good deed goes unpunished." what do you think he will want Twig to do for him?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Ethan Dialogue Journal Letter 6

Ethan Teacher Response 6

Dear Miss Armstrong

Instead of the troll asking for
something he just disappeared.
then they found a new family
of trolls and was called a troll.
he's not allowed to talk I wonder
how it's gonna turn out.

Dear

I wonder how it's going to
turn out too. Could you imagine
not being allowed to talk? I
hope Twig doesn't go crazy before
he finds a way out of this one.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Appendix I: Gavin's Dialogue Journal Entries
Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 1

Dear Miss O. RMS Tronay

I read how to survive almost
anything. Storm Calculator
When you hear thunder count
the seconds when lightning
flashes divided by 5.

This is on p. 9. (EX) "Boom", 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,
6, 7, 8, 9, 10, "Flash", $10 \div 5 = 2$ miles
away. Hide under a small tree when
outside in a storm. Hint: Lightning
strikes the highest thing don't let
it be you!

Sincerely

Gavin Teacher Response 1

Dear _____,

This book sounds like it has a lot of important information. Do you think you'll ever use any of the survival tips? I hope that you don't have to! What do you think about hiding under a small tree during a lightning storm? I think it might be safer to lie flat on the ground or in a ditch.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 2

p.47 Dear Mrs. Armstrong,
I'm reading how to survive
bullies on this page. #1 Ignore
the bully. EX: bully: loser!
Kid: ~~?? ??~~ #2 use reverse psychology
that means do the opposite. EX:
bully: loser! Kid: I want to lose.
#3 agree with the bully.
EX: Weirdo! Kid: thanks for
giving a compliment.

Answers to questions: 1st qua: Yes
2nd qua: the book said.

Sincerely

Gavin Teacher Response 2

Dear

This sounds like a book of lists, and this bully one seems funny. Do you think the author is being silly or do you think he really wants you to use these tips? I bet if you thanked a bully for calling you a weirdo the bully would be pretty confused! I can't wait to hear more about what you think about these tips.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

p33. Dear Mrs. Armstrong,
Don't cross the street
with a phone. Even me
I have a phone. Because
cars will hit you [ex]
[can't] adapt crossing. Blaw
Blaw Blaw... So keep a
phone in a pocket. I
will to.

Answers from
your note: I still think
that she wants us
to do it.

Sincerely

Gavin Teacher Response 3

Dear

I will be sure to keep my phone in my pocket anytime I am crossing the street! I love how you applied the author's tips to your own life. That tells me you were thinking about your reading. The phone tip seemed like better advice than calling a bully a weirdo. Do you think the author gives good advice/tips?

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

2.2 Dear Mrs Armstrong,
3 try making this.
Hitting the trail mix
st1: Get a bag or bowl
st2: add nuts
st3: add raisins
st4: add granola
st5: add ~~add~~ orzo rice cereal
st6: add M&M's
st7: add shredded cows and
st8: add pretzels
st9: stir
st10: enjoy

Answers

Allyes

Love

P.S: The bully called
him a weirdo.

Gavin Teacher Response 4

Dear _____

Yum! That's probably my favorite list so far because I love to eat trail mix. What's your favorite list so far? Why is it your favorite? You answered yes, the author gives good advice/tips. Why do you think so? I can't wait to hear your thoughts about your book.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Dear Mrs Armstrong,

The largest frog is the Goliath frog. It lives in West Africa. Its body may be a foot. It weighs about more than 6 pounds.

The smallest frog is in Cuba. (No English name.) It is a 1/2 inch.

The poison dark frog's skin is poisonous so Indians use the poison. This frog lives in South America.

Those were some frog facts.
love,

ps: "Stop Asking Questions!"

Gavin Teacher Response 5
Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 6

I'll never stop asking questions! They help both of us learn more about what you're reading. What would you do if you saw a foot-long frog? I would probably scream and run away. I'm surprised Indians use poison from frogs. Do you think they use it to hurt people?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Dear Miss Armstrong,

I'm reading Snakes Alive in ~~X~~ ray vision. Scientist kill snakes to collect venom to study. Snakes eat egg. the egg eating snakes swallow it whole. There's about 2,000 species of snakes.

Love

PS Can I ask questions and why won't you stop asking them?

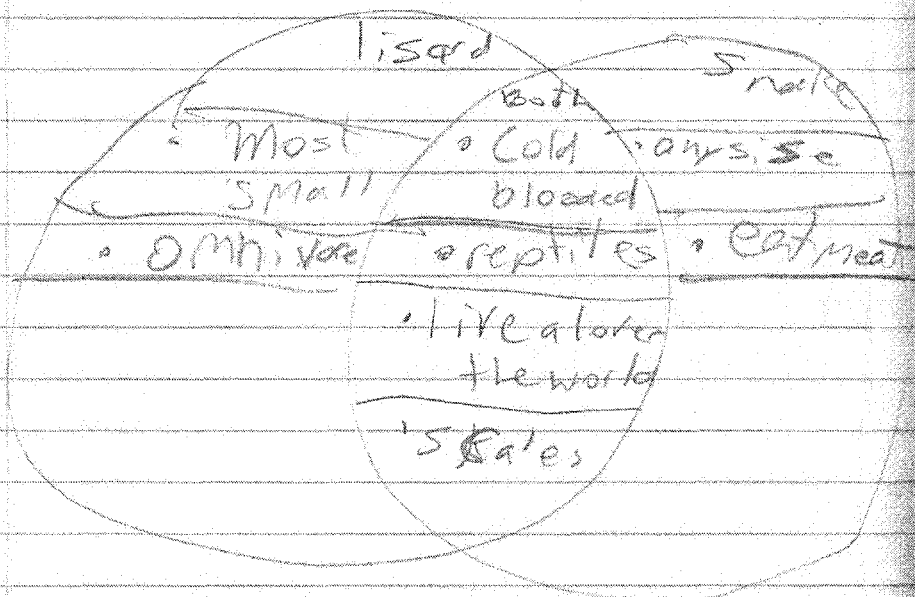
Gavin Teacher Response 6

I ask questions to learn more about what you're reading. Yes, you can ask me questions too! I think it's pretty cool snakes can swallow an egg whole. Why do you think they can do that? I would choke if I tried!

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Dear Mrs Armstrong

This is a chart
of lizards and snakes



Sincerely

Gavin Teacher Response 7

Dear _____,

I love how you compared and contrasted lizards and snakes using a Venn diagram. Did you know lizards were omnivores before you read it? I had no idea they like to eat both plants and meat.

Sincerely,

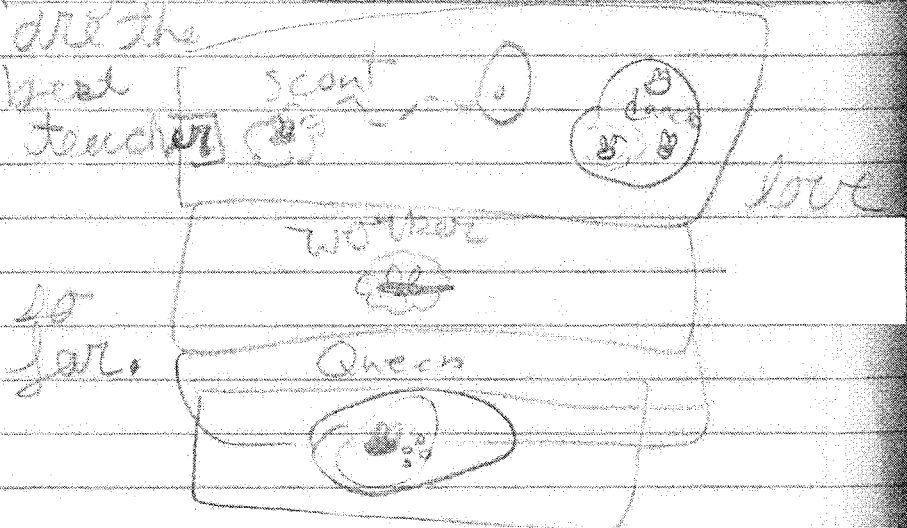
Miss Armstrong

Dear Mrs Armstrong

I made a chart - bee
workers and what
they do it's down here

Scout goes to flower
to flower to collect
pollen it does a dance
it shows
Worker workers work
they go to the flower
they get pollen and
Queen it lays eggs

PS you
are the
best
teacher



Gavin Teacher Response 8
Gavin Dialogue Journal Letter 9

Wow! I had no idea that bees must cooperate and work together to keep the hive running smoothly. I think the Queen bee has the easiest job. Who do you think has the easiest job?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

P.S. You are one of my best students!!



rat R

Dear Miss Arm -
strong

I'm reading inside the Sliding
door ~~door~~ group. a guy
sleeps in his soup and
a mouse is sleeping in
his pocket. When a dirty
ball rolls on the floor
it'll be Survival (finish
sentence at the end). Water is
are really craby ants. Don't
ask what the chocolate
milk is. Giant cookies
shrink maybe you.

Appendix J: Jane's Dialogue Journal Entries
Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 1

Dear Miss. Armstrong,

I'm reading the book Glass Castle by Jeanette Wells. The action in the story is the little girl in the story burns her whole body! Then her mom took her to the hospital and the doctor layed her down on a massive tray covered with ice. After that her parents took her home a few months later her parents and her brother, Brian and her were driving she fell out of the car. She thought her parents would not come to save her, but they did. I love the book because it's very interesting and I never get bored with the book.

Sincerely,



Jane Teacher Response 1

Dear _____,

I agree that you can never get bored with this book! The little girl in this story is actually the author, Jeannette Wells. A big worry I had when I was reading was whether Jeannette's parents could really take care of their children. She burned her whole body and fell out of a moving car. What do you think about her parents? Are they responsible enough to have kids? Keep reading! It's an interesting book (like you said!).

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 2

Jane Teacher Response 2

Dear Mrs. Armstrong,
I'm reading
The Witness by Robert Westall.
It takes place in Asia. At
first I thought that it's
about Jesus being born, but
it's about a kitten having
ticks. I was wrong again.
It's about both.

Sincerely,

Dear ,

I can tell you are thinking as
you read! Sometimes we have to fix
up the ideas in our head when we
read something proving them wrong.
It sounds like the author told the
story of Jesus's birth and the kitten
being born at the same time on
purpose. Why do you think the author
would do that?

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Dear Miss Armstrong,
I'm
reading Skylark by Patricia
MacLachlan. The problem is
there's very little bit of water
left. So Sarah taking Anna,
Caleb and herself to Maine,
but Papa refuses to go because
he won't leave his precious
land. Also Maggie, Mott, Violet,
Rose and the boys left the
prairie because there's no
water in their well. So Sarah
was sad. I love this book.
Next, I want to read Sarah,
Plain and Tall.

Love,

Jane Teacher Response 3

Dear _____,

It sounds like they are going through a draught on the prairie. Water is so important for survival. Do you think Papa should have gone to Maine with his family? That couldn't have been an easy decision to make. If you love this book, you will definitely love Sarah Plain and Tall. I have a copy you can borrow if you want.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Dear Mrs. Armstrong,

I think Papa should go to Maine, because he could die from drought. I would like if you let me read Sarah Plain and Tall. Caleb is very upset about leaving Papa. I feel bad about them leaving, which is good, but Papa is not. Also Papa is keeping the cat, Seal and dogs Nick and Lottie there with him. Anna and Caleb are surprised about how green Maine is.

the clouds in Maine and his
 children from around Maine. Carl
 is excited about the water.
 would be in 1922. I were him.
 Sarah took them to her aunt's
 house to stay. I wonder how
 she going to explain how she
 knows Aunt and Cal's because
 the aunts never knew Sarah got
 married to someone with side.

Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 4 (continued)

Jane Teacher Response 4

I wonder if the aunts are going to like Caleb and Anna aka Annie.

Love,

Dear

What a wonderful letter! I love how you kept track of your thoughts in different colors. Anna and Caleb were probably surprised by all the green of Maine because they are used to the dry brown of the prairie. I can't believe Sarah never told her aunts about the kids! Do you think the aunts will like Caleb and Annie? I sure hope they do! Why do you think Sarah never told them about the kids?

Sincerely,

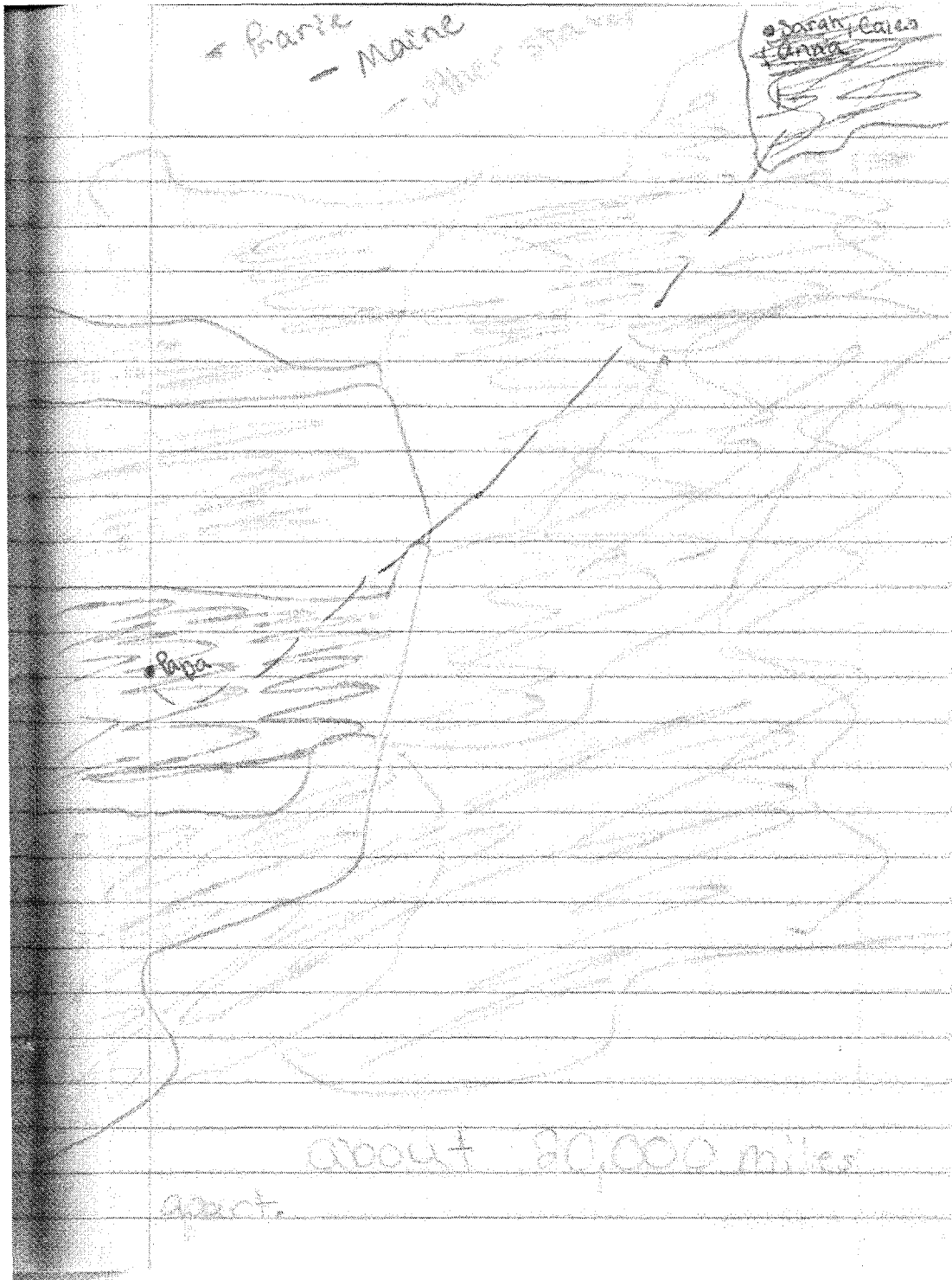
Miss Armstrong

Dear Mrs. Armstrong, I don't think Sarah told the aunts about Anna or Caleb because she wanted it to be a surprise to them. Caleb and Anna finally got to meet Sarah's brother William. Caleb says he looks like Sarah Plain and Tall. Anna and Papa are all there back and forth. Poor Caleb he is dreaming about Papa, he misses him so much. I wish the family could reunite. Sadly, they can't because Papa's at the Prairie and Sarah, Caleb, Anna are in Maine.

Love,

Picture next page

Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 5 (continued)



Jane Teacher Response 5

What a nice surprise for the aunts! I love your map. It give me a nice visual of how far away the family is from each other. Did they ever reunite? I think they should because Sarah is going to have a baby! I'm glad you loved the book!

Sincerely,

Miss Armstro

Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 6

Dear Mrs. Armstrong,

Anna does not know
where they are. When Sarah told
her does know where they are.

It's so sad to read about a
family being spit up in
different states. Caleb and
Anna are going to a different
school.

Love,

Dear Mrs. Armstrong,

Finished! Sarah going to have a kid

Love,

23. I joined the bc-h

GR 4
pg

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

I'm going to make a chart

Jane Dialogue Journal Letter 7 (continued)

Likes

Dislikes

each other

[illegible]

Seal

Nick and Lottie

neighbors

water

food

Dear Mrs. Armstrong,
Papa came to Maine in Skylark then it rained in the Prarie so they went back as a family. That was in Skylark. Sarah is writing letters to Anna, Caleb, and Papa and their responding.

Caleb made a song that goes:

"Woolly ragwort all around,"

"Woolly ragwort in the ground,"

"Wolly ragwort grows and grows,"

"Wolly ragwort in your nose"

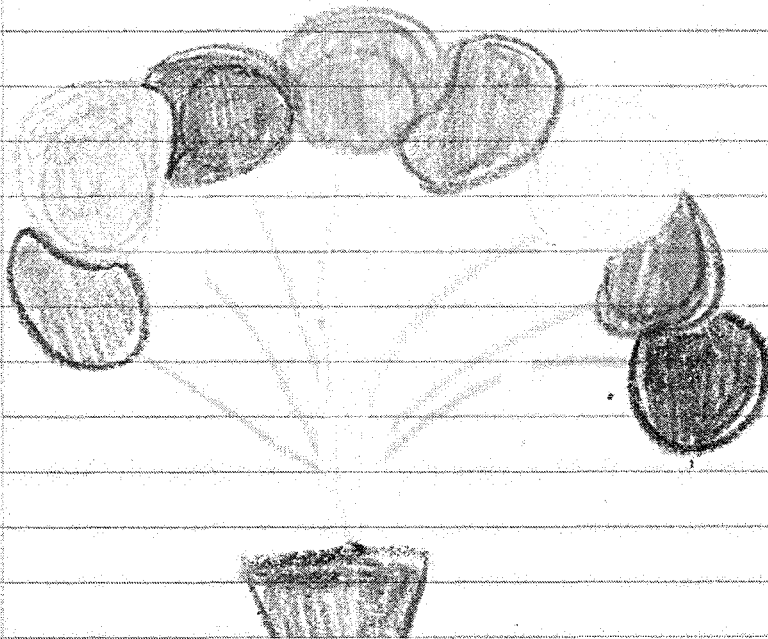
After Caleb sang his wolly ragwort song everyone

laughed. So far I love
the books it's exciting.

from

I'm drawing flowers because
that's what they talk about.

Bride's Bonnet



Jane Teacher Response 6

Dear _____,

I'm so glad the family got back together in Skylark! That Caleb is a funny kid - I think he might be my favorite character. Who is your favorite?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Dear Mrs. Armstrong,
Sarah taught Anna and Caleb to swim. But, she taught the to swim in COW pond!

GROSS!!! My favorite character is Caleb because he is funny.

Love,

Dear

Eww! That water must have been disgusting! It kind of reminds me of my dad because he used to swim in the Erie canal. Yuck! What do you think is going to happen next?

Sincerely,

Dear Miss. Armstrong,

I'm
reading the book James
and the Giant Peach. The
characters are Miss. Spider
Silkworm, Centipede, Glow-worm,
Gricket, James, Mr. Bogg, Ant,
Sponge, and Aunt Spiker.

Love,

Miss
Spider

Jane Teacher Response 8

Dear _____,

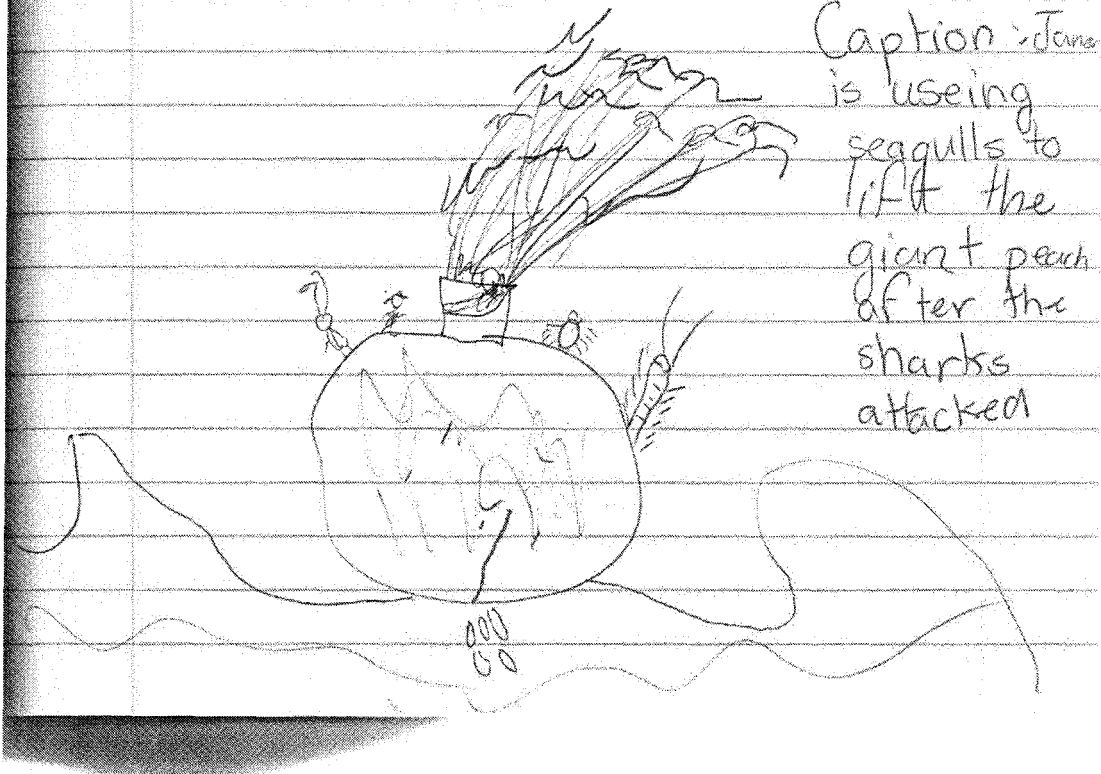
How do you like James and the Giant Peach so far? When I read it, I remember feeling really bad for the way James was ~~so~~ treated by his two aunts. I was very glad when the insects became his friends. How about you?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Dear Mrs. Armstrong, I love James and the Giant peach so far. It's adventurous and it was brave of James to ~~buy~~ the crystal seedy things from that stranger. I also think Aunt Spilser and Aunt Sponge are very mean.

Sincerely,



Caption: Jane is using seagulls to lift the giant peach after the sharks attacked

Appendix K: Lena's Dialogue Journal Entries

Lena Dialogue Journal Letter 1

Lena Teacher Response 1

Dear Mr. Armstrong,

I'm reading a book called
Tattoo of Death. It is
a Choose Your Own Adventure
book by R.D. Montgomery.

Dear _____,

The title Tattoo of Death sounds
very interesting and a little bit
frightening. What made you pick
it out? I'm not surprised you're
reading a "choose your own adventure"
book because you're such a great
writer. It's like you're in charge
of the story. I can't wait to
hear more about your thoughts
about your book.

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Dear Miss Armstrong,

The Tattoo of Death is my book, and I like books that are mine. I'm reading a different book now. The book is called Story of the Earth by Stuart Waller. I was just about to start page 10. I disagree with the entire book so far. It's telling me that basically in a summary, everything was created by the big bang. But I think that God made it all.

Sincerely,

Lena Teacher Response 2

Dear _____,

I love how you are thinking critically about your book. You aren't just accepting what the author says. There are huge debates about the big bang theory and creation. I'm not sure if people will ever agree about it. Are there any similarities between the big bang and creation?

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Dear Mr. Drummond,

I've never heard that question before! Maybe there are similarities but I just haven't figured them out yet. I am anxious for Christmas and am reading this book. I have to remember that it was Jesus that made the world, it was Jesus that died for my sin, and it was Jesus that was born on Christmas day millions of years ago. really I'm telling you this because the more people know it the better.

Sincerely

Lena Teacher Response 3

Dear _____,

I can tell you are very passionate about this subject, and I think that is great that you stand by your beliefs. I also think it's great that you are willing to read about viewpoints that differ from your own. What do you plan on reading next? Do you think you'd like to read more about the big bang theory vs. creation?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Lena Dialogue Journal Letter 4

Dear Mrs. Armstrong,

If someone brought
up the subject "epd"
and let me speak
I would never shut
up about it. till I
would say for the rest of
the day would be
on the line of a "G"
did this. God is that
I don't know, what I'll
read next, but when
I'm done with this
one it would be
nice if the next one
will be on the same
topic. I am learning
many things in this
world & I'm sure.

Your friends

Lena Teacher Response 4

Dear _____,

We will have to be on the lookout for books on that topic. Do you prefer nonfiction books or are you willing to try some fiction? I can't wait to hear more about what you are reading.

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Dear Mr. Armstrong,

I would prefer nonfiction
because I ~~highly~~ dislike
fiction. I don't know why
I am learning very
much from the book
like that ~~with~~ a little
of the atmosphere
is opened - it is very
funny - the bubbles
in soft drinks are
made of carbon dioxide.

Your BFF,

Lena Teacher Response 5

Dear _____

When you pointed out that the bubbles in soda were carbon dioxide, I thought the joke you made was very funny! I'm glad that you are learning new things from this book. I called up my friend Katie for Christian book recommendations, and she said that Left Behind and The Chronicles of Narnia are two great series. Both are fiction... what do you think?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Lena Dialogue Journal Letter 6

Lena Teacher Response 6

Dear Ms. Armstrong,

Narnia! (thumb up) I already have a par-up book that summarizes the series and have watched all the movies, but I haven't heard of Left Behind. I'm not very far with this book (chapter 10 or 31) but when I am I hope my parents will let me. So far, as predicted - no sign.

Dear

No sign of what? I can't wait to hear the rest of your thought! I'll see if I can track down copies of Narnia and/or Left Behind.

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Dear Ms. Armstrong,

I'm sorry I didn't
finish my letter because
of character files I was
starting where I left
off. I did create the
world. And thank you for
the copies.

Your B.S.

P.S. Fiction like Harry
I might say left B.S.

Lena Teacher Response 7

Dear _____,

Good news! I have the first Narnia book in the series. It's called The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. I will bring it in for you 😊

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Dear Ms. Armstrong,
Thanks for the book!
I'm glad for centers
I'll get a review on
the question of
what you notice about
the author's craft.
My answer to that
is "It's all LIES!"
Well, I'm almost done
only 3 pages left in the
index. I'll be
my move to display
the last move to
repress my memory.

Your friend,
[redacted]

Lena Teacher Response 8

Dear _____

2/7/12

That's an interesting point you made about the author's craft. Do you think he feels like he is telling lies? Maybe he just has a different point of view. I'm glad you're excited about Narnia!

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Lena Dialogue Journal Letter 9

Dear Mrs. Maguire,
You are absolutely
right about that. Let's
not try to die, but
from my view, it is
like that. I can't help
it!

Learning so much
from this type
has ended it's a
lot for fate:
earthquake
scat

Lena Teacher Response 9

You have such a great attitude toward learning new things 😊 The facts you showed me about the number of earthquakes that happen was very interesting. It's hard to believe the earth is constantly shifting beneath your feet! I can't wait to hear more about your reading.

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Same Th. Circumstances

The earth moving
beneath our feet is
cool, but you will
hear and motion
this subject - I'm
stop with - I'll
stop!

Well - Learning about
Harmon characters

BT,

P.S. Love Hail The King
And Queens Of Narnia

Appendix L: Mason's Dialogue Journal Entries

Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 1

Mason Teacher Response 1

Dear Miss Armstrong

The book I'm reading is R.L. Stine's
ghost of fear street The boy who
ate fear street. The thing I really
like is the end because I left
off with a snake on the boy's
leg. The boy is at his aunt's house.
I readed to the 3rd chapter.
This book make me excited.

Sincerely

Dear

Great writing! You're pretty brave
reading an R.L. Stine book. There's
a snake on the boy's leg?! That
would freak me out! What about you?
I'm glad you're excited to read the
book. Is R.L. Stine one of your
favorite authors?

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Dear Miss Armstrong

So far it is interesting the boy
ate a green molly sponge with dish
soap. I would not wait to eat that.
No I would not be afraid of
a snake on my leg. Yes R.L. Stine
is one of my favorite authors.
I can't wait to read more.

Sincerely

Dear Miss Armstrong

The boy is under a curtain that's
why he ate a sponge and dish soap.
R.L. Stine is my favorite author
because I like creepy stuff.
The boy ~~also~~ dirt and worms.
He also ate keys, bags, and
Also he ate seat pads.
I can't wait to read another
book.

Sincerely

Mason Teacher Response 2
Mason Teacher Response 3

Dear _____,

That green, moldy sponge and fish scap combination sounds disgusting! Why did the boy eat it? I'm hoping he was forced to. Why is R. L. Stine one of your favorite authors? My brother used to really like his books too because they were so creepy/scary.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Dear _____,

R. L. Stine is definitely the creepiest. That poor boy! All the disgusting things he had to eat reminds me of another book called How to Eat Fried Worms by Thomas Rockwell. Instead of a curse, the boy is trying to win a bet. Would you be interested in reading it? I have a copy you could borrow.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 4
Mason Teacher Response 4

Dear Miss Armstrong
I really like ~~How~~ to Eat Fried
Worms. It is ~~is~~ exciting so far.
I read the bet ~~it~~ ~~seem~~ gross
eating worms. I really want to
read more.

Dear

I'm glad to hear that you
are excited to read more of
How to Eat Fried Worms. I agree
that a bet involving eating
worms is pretty gross. Some people
have tried to have this book banned
because they think eating worms is
too disgusting for kids to be
reading about. What do you think?

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 5
Mason Teacher Response 5

Dear Miss Armstrong
I think it should not. It's
amazing that he ate all those
worms. I would not eat even
one worm. What about you?
Thanks for being the teacher.

Dear

You're welcome! I agree that the
book shouldn't be banned - it's a great
story. I would absolutely puke
eating just one worm. I don't even
like touching them. What are you
planning on reading next?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 6
Mason Teacher Response 6

Dear Miss Armstrong
The book I'm reading now is
Bone. The author is Jeff Smith.
I'm on page 82. It's really
good. I really want to read
more.

Dear

Bone did look like a good book.
I really liked those illustrations
you were showing me. What is the
book about? It looked like some
ugly rat creatures to me!

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 7
Mason Teacher Response 7

Dear Miss Armstrong
It is about tall tails.
I flipped the book it was
really good. I want more
Bone books. There was this on
page where the rat creatures
take their tails off. Some
parts were funny.

Dear _____
I'm glad you like the Bone books.
Why did the rat creatures take
their tails off? It would be
kind of funny-looking to see a
rat with no tail.

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 8
Mason Teacher Response 8

Dear Miss Armstrong
I'm reading Diary of a Wimpy
Kid. So far its cool I want
to read more.

Dear

I've read four of the Diary of a
Wimpy Kid books, and I think they're
hilarious! What do you think of Greg
so far? He certainly has an interesting
view on things.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Mason Dialogue Journal Letter 9
Mason Teacher Response 9

Dear Miss Armstrong
I think Greg does some weird
stuff, so far I'm on page 61.
It's been funny. I want to
collect all the books, I can't
wait to read more.

Dear

Why do you think Greg does all that
weird stuff? Sometimes I think he
is just trying way too hard to
be cool. I can see why you'd like
to collect those books - they are funny!!

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Appendix M: Nora's Dialogue Journal Entries

Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 1

Nora Teacher Response 1

Dear Miss Armstrong,

I am reading a book called Dolphin Tale. By Gabrielle Charbonnet. It is based on a true story. It is about a dolphin whose tail gets cut off by a crab trap. The dolphin's name is Winter. That's my book!

from,

Dear ,

I remember talking about this book with you when you first started reading it. One of the most amazing things about the story is that it's true! I feel bad that Winter's tail was cut off and relieved that they made her a new one. I can't wait to hear about your next book from home!

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 2

Nora Teacher Response 2

Dear Miss Armstrong,

I am reading a book called The Girls book How to be the best Everything. It is written by Julianne Foster. One section of my book is why you are late for school. One example is "I squeezed the tooth paste to hard and spent an hour putting back in the tube.
From,

Dear _____,

The section Why You are Late for School sounds like it's full of silly excuses. Did it make you laugh or smile at all while you were reading it? I think the title is interesting - the How to be the Best Everything part. Do you think the author knows what it means to be the best everything?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 3
Nora Teacher Response 3

Dear Miss Armstrong,

I am reading the same book you it did make me laugh, but I do not know if the author knows what it means to me. I have been everything. The time I am reading a passage called "How to Save the Planet" thought it was interesting. One way to save the planet is to turn off the faucet when you are brushing your teeth.

from,

Dear

"How to Save the Planet" does sound like an interesting passage. Even the small things, like turning off the faucet when you brush your teeth, add up. Why do you think the author included this passage? The last one (why you are late for school) seemed silly while this one is more serious.

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 4
Nora Teacher Response 4

Dear Miss Armstrong,
I am reading a book called Judy Moody saves
the world only read 7 pages. I do not
know who the author is, Judy and her
T.P. club thinks of ways to save the
world. It is very interesting.
from

Dear _____,
This does sound like an interesting
book. Do you think Judy and the
T.P. club will come up with some
good ways to save the world? I'm
wondering what they will think
of. Does this book remind you
of the "How to Save the Planet"
passage you wrote about in
your last letter?

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 5

Nora Teacher Response 5

Dear Miss Armstrong,

No I do not think Judy Moody saves the world is similar to the passage How to Save the Planet. I am farther along in the book and Judy Moody does not want to save the world anymore because she cannot think of anymore ways to save the planet,

from,

Dear

I'm surprised Judy gave up so quickly on figuring out how to save the world, but I guess that is a big job for one kid! What do you think? I can't wait to hear about your next book.

Sincerely,
Miss Armstrong

Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 6
Nora Teacher Response 6

Dear Miss, Armstrong,

I have just barely started War Horse and only found out the horses name and that it is a very long time ago. The horses name is Joey. I really love this book. Joey is a Morgan. He is very very powerful from,

Dear

Joey sounds like a very special horse. Since the title is War Horse, it makes me think Joey will go to war. What do you predict will happen to Joey?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 7

Nora Teacher Response 7

Dear Miss Armstrong,

I think Joey goes to work and think he will return to the little boy. I have read 5 more pages. The horse went off to work with a man. he was taken from a little boy. This book just keeps getting better and better.

Dear

I'm glad you like your book! I hope Joey will return to the boy too. Did the little boy give permission for Joey to go with the man? That's sad that Joey and the little boy are separated."

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 8

Nora Teacher Response 8

Dear Miss Armstrong,

War Horse was wayyyy to confusing. I started Judy Moody predicts the future. It is a very good book. Judy loves Mood rings and Magic 8 balls. That's my book.

Dear

I've given up confusing books too and tried something that's a better fit. I think Judy Moody is the perfect fit since you've read her stories before. What do you like about Judy Moody books?

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Nora Dialogue Journal Letter 9
Nora Teacher Response 9

Dear Miss Armstrong,

I like Judy Moody books because they are funny also she is a crazy girl. Judy Moody only listens to magic 8 balls. Judy Moody is also crazy in the movies. It is my favorite book.

Dear

I've heard that Judy Moody has some pretty crazy ideas. I can't imagine only listening to a magic 8 ball. What does she do if she doesn't like the decision? She is a funny girl! I can see why the books are your favorite.

Sincerely,

Miss Armstrong

Appendix N: Student Interviews

Student Interview Questions

Participant: Anna

Date: February 29, 2012

1. *How does writing in a dialogue journal help you understand your book?*
It helps me understand my book better because I have to write down what is going on in my book. I have to pay attention.
2. *How do you decide what to write about in your dialogue journal?*
I just put down what the characters say or do- basically it's what I read that day.
3. *How has writing in your dialogue journal affected your thinking as you read your book?*
I have to think about what happens more.
4. *How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?*
I usually see what questions you have in your letter and answer them. Then I write down what happens in my book.
5. *Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.*
First I write the date. Then I write Dear Miss Armstrong. I kind of just go down the list.
6. *Does writing in your dialogue journal help you with the other types of writing you do in school? Why do you think so?*
Yes. The more that I write, the better I get at it. It helps me with ELA writing like comprehension.
7. *How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?*
I get excited because when I get an idea I can write it down for you to read.
8. *How do you express whether you like or dislike a book in your dialogue journal?*
I do both, but I really like my book right now. So I just write down that I like it.

Student Interview Questions

Participant: Cameron

Date: March 5, 2012

1. *How does writing in a dialogue journal help you understand your book?*
It kind of helps me understand. I guess it probably helps me think about my reading. Like what happened and the different events.
2. *How do you decide what to write about in your dialogue journal?*
Basically I pick out what I like the most or what I think is the coolest. I started a few books and put them back if they weren't interesting.
3. *How has writing in your dialogue journal affected your thinking as you read your book?*
I think more about what I should write about so then I pay more attention to the interesting parts in books.
4. *How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?*
Mostly I use your feedback by answering back to your letter before I write any new stuff.
5. *Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.*
Sometimes I'll actually check each one off the list when I'm writing my letter. Then I'll go back and erase my checkmarks.
6. *Does writing in your dialogue journal help you with the other types of writing you do in school? Why do you think so?*
Yeah, it does. When I have to write down answers to your questions, it's kind of like writing answers to different questions in other subjects. Like social studies or ELA.
7. *How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?*
I think it is pretty fun because I get to write about what I pick out to read. I get to choose what I write about.
8. *How do you express whether you like or dislike a book in your dialogue journal?*
Sometimes I would only write about a book once because I didn't like it very much, or I might tell you this is the last time I'll be reading it. Then I let you know what my new book choice is. I'm reading another book like Howlday Inn right now and I really like it. I'm trying to stay away from R.L. Stine because I've read a lot of his books already this year.

Student Interview Questions

Participant: Ethan

Date: February 29, 2012

1. *How does writing in a dialogue journal help you understand your book?*
It doesn't. Most of the books I have reads before and can understand on my own. I think these journals might be better for kids in second grade.
2. *How do you decide what to write about in your dialogue journal?*
I usually write down stuff that happened. Sometimes I say what I think about it.
3. *How has writing in your dialogue journal affected your thinking as you read your book?*
It hasn't. I just read like I usually do.
4. *How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?*
I answer the questions and that's all.
5. *Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.*
I used it in the beginning, but I don't really use it anymore.
6. *Does writing in your dialogue journal help you with the other types of writing you do in school? Why do you think so?*
Yeah, probably. If I write more, my handwriting will get better.
7. *How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?*
Sometimes it's boring and sometimes it's fun. *Why is it boring sometimes?*
Well, I only said that because I don't like to write. *Why is it fun sometimes?* I get to write about MY book.
8. *How do you express whether you like or dislike a book in your dialogue journal?*
I usually just say "I don't like this book" and then tell you what book I am changing to.

Student Interview Questions

Participant: Gavin

Date: February 29, 2012

1. *How does writing in a dialogue journal help you understand your book?*
It helps me because I get to tell other people how I feel about my book. I have to think about what is interesting in my book.
2. *How do you decide what to write about in your dialogue journal?*
There are tons of details in my books so I have to pick out the best details to write down in my journal.
3. *How has writing in your dialogue journal affected your thinking as you read your book?*
Writing in a journal is like making my own book. It's kind of like a diary because you get to write about what you like. *How does knowing you get to write about what you like affect your reading?* I will read more and pay closer attention to the stuff in the book that I like because I can write anything that I want down.
4. *How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?*
If you ask a question, at the end of my letter I answer them.
5. *Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.*
I don't really use it. It's important so I should use it.
6. *Does writing in your dialogue journal help you with the other types of writing you do in school? Why do you think so?*
Yes. It improves my writing. It helps with spelling, ELA, and handwriting. Reading from my book improves my reading.
7. *How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?*
It's kind of fun. It's like talking on the phone but with reading and writing.
8. *How do you express whether you like or dislike a book in your dialogue journal?*
If I don't like a book, I put it back and find one with juicy details that I want to write about.

Student Interview Questions

Participant: Jane

Date: February 29, 2012

1. *How does writing in a dialogue journal help you understand your book?*
After I read, sometimes I forget what was going on in the book. By writing in my journal, I remember what happens and I can look back through my journal to read what I thought.
2. *How do you decide what to write about in your dialogue journal?*
I like to write down the most interesting part. The juiciest parts are what I like to write about.
3. *How has writing in your dialogue journal affected your thinking as you read your book?*
It makes me read longer so I can add more details to my writing.
4. *How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?*
I answer your questions. I like reading what you think about my book.
5. *Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.*
The checklist reminds me to make my letter more interesting. I like to write more than five sentences because less wouldn't be telling much.
6. *Does writing in your dialogue journal help you with the other types of writing you do in school? Why do you think so?*
Yes. My penmanship gets better, and I have learned how to indent. We use comprehension sheets in ELA. Writing in the journal teaches me how to comprehend my book the same as when we read a book in class. I think I do better on comprehension questions now than without writing in a journal.
7. *How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?*
I feel good about it. I really like reading and writing if it is interesting, and it is when I can read and write about what I want to. I also like how it helps me understand my book.
8. *How do you express whether you like or dislike a book in your dialogue journal?*
So far I have really liked my books, so I write that and explain why.

Student Interview Questions

Participant: Lena

Date: March 5, 2012

1. *How does writing in a dialogue journal help you understand your book?*

Writing in a dialogue journal helps me understand my book because I like writing much more than reading, so it helps me to stay on track. I have to summarize things. It gives me a chance to tell you what I think about my book.

2. *How do you decide what to write about in your dialogue journal?*

Like I said before, it's kind of like summarizing the book. I have to put all my ideas down. To give you a visual, it's like the four-square sheet we use in class.

3. *How has writing in your dialogue journal affected your thinking as you read your book?*

When I know that I get to write, it actually makes it a little more difficult to read. I might rush through my book to get to writing. Sometimes I graze over a paragraph and have to go back and reread because I wasn't thinking.

4. *How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?*

The checklist says to respond to the teacher, so I usually answer your questions. The subject that I was writing about a lot is one that people aren't really on the same page as me. It was nice to read what you wrote because I like knowing that there's a person who is on the same page. It makes me feel like I am not the only one.

5. *Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.*

After I write my letter, I usually look back to see if I did what I was supposed to. I check it off if I did. Then I just keep going back and forth for each one then erase when I'm done.

6. *Does writing in your dialogue journal help you with the other types of writing you do in school? Why do you think so?*

Yes because it definitely helps with my cursive, and no because the writing is on a different subject. Plus I already like writing. If you gave me 20 documents and two hours to write about them, I would get it done in one hour.

7. *How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?*

I'm so excited when I get to write that I kind of rush. Sometimes I might wake up and start my day feeling blue, but then you show up and it cheers me right up because I know I will get to write. When I was in third grade, I hated recess. But then I started bringing my notebook with me, and it made it so much better because I could write and write and write.

8. *How do you express whether you like or dislike a book in your dialogue journal?*

I usually write my emotions down. I'll write "I like this part because...", or "I don't like this part because..." Sometimes I'll write down a part that is cool or a part that I think is stupid. I guess you could say I'm an emotional writer and I do a lot of emotional writing.

Student Interview Questions

Participant: Mason

Date: February 29, 2012

1. *How does writing in a dialogue journal help you understand your book?*

It sort of helps me... Yeah, it actually does help me to read and understand more because I don't really read at home ever.

2. *How do you decide what to write about in your dialogue journal?*

I write down stuff that I think is interesting. I will write down funny parts too.

3. *How has writing in your dialogue journal affected your thinking as you read your book?*

I have to think about what is interesting. It makes me pay more attention to what is going on in the story.

4. *How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?*

I answer your questions in sentences.

5. *Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.*

I use it to make sure I have all the things I need. Like five sentences.

6. *Does writing in your dialogue journal help you with the other types of writing you do in school? Why do you think so?*

Yeah. It helps me with my homework. During ELA we have comprehension questions. It's kind of like when we have to answer your questions.

7. *How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?*

I like it because I get to read more. It also helps me practice writing more.

8. *How do you express whether you like or dislike a book in your dialogue journal?*

I just write if it's a good book.

Student Interview Questions

Participant: Nora

Date: March 5, 2012

1. *How does writing in a dialogue journal help you understand your book?*

Writing in a journal helps me understand my book because I think about it more than just reading through the pages. I think about what will happen and write it down.

2. *How do you decide what to write about in your dialogue journal?*

First I'll go through your letter to answer any questions. Then I usually talk about what book I'm reading and I will summarize what happens in the book.

3. *How has writing in your dialogue journal affected your thinking as you read your book?*

Knowing that I have to write in my journal makes me think and understand more. I think about what will happen and make predictions.

4. *How do you use the feedback from the teacher in your letters?*

I usually write the answers to your questions first. Sometimes you write, "What do you think will happen?" so I have to make sure I answer that before I start reading my book.

5. *Describe how you use the dialogue journal checklist.*

At the end, when I am all done writing I go back to the checklist. If anything is missing, I try to add it. I also think about the steps while I am writing.

6. *Does writing in your dialogue journal help you with the other types of writing you do in school? Why do you think so?*

Yes. It makes me think about what I write rather than writing about what I don't know. The journal has helped a lot with proofreading. It helps me with comprehension questions in ELA because I have to understand the book in order to go through and write down answers to questions.

7. *How do you feel about writing in a dialogue journal about your independent reading?*

I like writing in my journal because it helps me with other writing and understanding my book.

8. *How do you express whether you like or dislike a book in your dialogue journal?*

I would say either "I like it because..." or "I dislike it because..." I'll also tell you if I think that the book is confusing.